

*E. Playdell Jones*

THE  
MIDNIGHT BELL,  
A GERMAN STORY.

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MIDNIGHT BELL

GEORGE TOWN

THE  
MIDNIGHT BELL,  
A GERMAN STORY,  
FOUNDED ON INCIDENTS IN REAL LIFE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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A round unvarnish'd tale.      OTHELLO.

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VOL. I.

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1798.

# MIDNIGHT BELL

A CRYSTAL STORY

THE FIRST OF THE MIDNIGHT BELL SERIES

BY THE AUTHOR

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I. THE MIDNIGHT BELL

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CHAP. I.

I am not mad ; this hair I tear is mine ;  
I am not mad ; I would to heaven I were !  
For then 'tis like I should forget myself.  
Oh, if I could, what grief should I forget !  
If I were mad, I should forget my son,  
Or madly think a babe of clouts were he ;  
I am not mad ; too well, too well I feel  
The diff'rent plague of each calamity.

KING JOHN.

COUNT Cohenburg was descended from one of the noblest houses of Saxony ; his castle, situated on a branch of the river Elbe ; was one of the most magnificent in

the German empire ; his income was large, and his character celebrated, as one of the first men of his age.

At an early period of his life he espoused the second daughter of the marquis of Brandenburg, and she blessed her husband with five sons ; the eldest and the youngest of whom alone survived their mother.

At the time of count Cohenburg's death, which did not happen till he had some years buried his countess, Alphonfus, his eldest son, was in his twenty-sixth, and Frederic, his youngest, in his nineteenth year.

Alphonfus, now count Cohenburg, in his person was rather pleasing than hand-

some ; his height about the middle stature, his mind well cultivated in every branch of learning, his temper mild and benevolent, but withall addicted to suspicion.

Frederic was a man formed to captivate ; his features were regular, his countenance handsome and prepossessing, his figure tall and elegant ; the advantages of education had been bestowed on him equally with his brother, but he had not so eagerly drank in instruction, — he was, however, an agreeable and even a fascinating companion, — he was passionate, but his anger was of a moment.

Arrived at his twenty-second year, Frederic became enamoured of a lady of Luxemburg ; she was beautiful, but delicate in the extreme ; she was an orphan,

and possessed of a large fortune: — Frederic purchased a mansion in the vicinity of his brother's castle, and having espoused his beloved Sophia, every earthly happiness seemed to smile on him and his newly-married bride.

Within the year Frederic was blessed by the birth of a son.

Count Alphonfus was a beholder of his brother's happiness: he felt a wish for the same felicity Frederic enjoyed; he accordingly determined to marry, and selected from amongst the beauteous maids who adorned the German court, Anna, the only daughter of the duke of Coblenz. She was a woman in whom every engaging attraction was centred; her form was elegant, her manners affable and po-

lite; there was something in her countenance that outshone regular beauty, and a vivacity in her conversation, that charmed the senses of the enraptured listener.

Alphonfus was now as happy as his brother; and in the course of ten months his Anna brought him a son, on the same day on which Sophia gave birth to a second infant, which proved a female.

The name of his father was given to the infant son of count Alphonfus.

The following year Sophia brought her husband a third child, but the period of its entrance into the world was dated by the death of its mother.

The passions of Frederic were strong,

and this proved a stroke which went nigh to unman his fortitude ; the soothing of his brother however tended greatly to raise his depressed spirits.

Anna proved herself a not less affectionate sister to Frederic, than a mother to his children ; she soothed them, consoled their father, performed for them every lenient action ; and in short so forcible were her attentions, that she succeeded in lightening the burden of their sorrow.

Count Alphonfus loved his brother tenderly ; he looked on his sorrows with a feeling eye ; he would have alleviated them at the expence of half his worth ; by any means, rather than by the assiduities of his Anna,—he conceived too highly of her to suppose her capable of be-

flowing on another the minutest particle of that love which she bore him ; — he even repeated to himself that it was her love for him, which induced her thus to attend to his brother ; — he knew the evil tendency of suspicion, and had always struggled to combat against it ; but suspicion was a part of his nature, and would not always be subdued.

He watched his brother, and every turn of the countess's features when in Frederic's presence ; he was convinced of his mistake ; he was even on the point of apologising to his wife for the wrong he had done her in his thoughts ; but he considered that he should, by so doing, only lay open to her an error in his heart, with which she was unacquainted ; and therefore contented himself with the reso-

lution of never again admitting a thought to her discredit.

Frederic's youngest child had survived its mother but a few hours, and, in the third year after her death, his eldest fell a victim to the grave : he recovered from this severe shock only to feel a greater, — his daughter died in his arms ! — Misfortune seemed to have marked him out for her sport — he resolved to leave the scene of all his woes, and travel : — a hasty farewell was said by him to his brother and sister, and he departed.

In four years he returned ; his manners were much altered ; he was become dissatisfied, uneasy, absent ; in short, no single trace of the former count Frederic was left.

Count Alphonfus was moved by his appearance, but his suspicious temper could not forbear revolving a subject which it had once disclaimed; — he determined however to bear his thoughts in silence, — he did so, — and in the course of eight months, Frederic again left Saxony.

The chief emotion which now swayed the breast of Alphonfus was pity; he fancied he perceived his brother's love for his wife, and his struggle to conceal it. The countess spoke frequently of the change in Frederic's temper, — her language served to convince Alphonfus that his brother was indifferent to her, — this was a point gained that gave him great satisfaction, yet he wished Frederic never to return.

Five years elapsed ere Frederic revisited Germany; he stayed but a short time in Saxony, and was then absent two more years; on his last return, his former disquietude of temper seemed converted into a settled melancholy; he retired to his mansion, and said he had formed a resolution to live a life of seclusion.

Alphonfus now imagined that he had found some means of gaining Anna's love, and that by pretending to keep himself retired in his own mansion, he thought to elude his brother's suspicion; he still, however, determined to keep a seal on his lips, but to open wide his eyes and ears.

The count's only son, Alphonfus, was now in his seventeenth year; his form was manly and well turned, his countenance

rendered interesting and handsome by a pair of black eyes, and finely arched eyebrows, his cheeks were ruddy, his lips wore the smile of good-humour, and his short black hair hung curling round his neck; his intellects were strong, his genius discerning, and his mind well informed.

Nearly a year had elapsed since the arrival of Frederic in his native country, when an affair of consequence, relating to the will of his late father, called count Alphonfus to the metropolis of the German empire.

He visited his brother the day prior to his departure; — he bade a tender farewell to his wife and son — “My Anna is now in Frederic’s power!” This idea a

moment arrested his steps, as he was crossing the hall of the castle to the vehicle that awaited him :— “ but is he not bound in honour to protect her ? — he is ! — and I will not suspect him.” — He left the castle and proceeded on his journey, accompanied by an old and faithful servant.

Nearly two months had elapsed since the departure of count Alphonfus, ere the period for his return to the castle of Copenhurg was mentioned by him in his letters to his wife : he had written frequently to her, and every letter was replete with his anxiety again to behold her.

At length the time for his arrival was fixed, and the countess awaited it with

every mark of ardent love ; when, on the morning of the day which he had stated for his arrival, the servant who had accompanied him came to the castle alone ; the anxious looks of the countess demanded a speedy explanation of his business,—“ Was he the harbinger of the count ? ” she asked.

“ Alas ! no,” he answered.

“ Oh, he is dead ! he is murdered ! ” she exclaimed, and sunk lifeless on the ground.

Her fears were too well founded ; the old servant brought the following information, that two ruffians, who had burst from a thicket about ten leagues distant

from Cohenburg castle, had fallen upon him and stabbed him to the heart.

Tears came to the relief of Alphonfus; and the first words his sorrow permitted him to articulate, were an order to a domestic to convey the sad intelligence to his uncle, and request his immediate presence at the castle.

When recollection again returned to the unhappy Anna, she waved her hand in signal to the surrounding domestics to depart; and, upon being left alone with her son, thus addressed him:

“Alphonfus, thy uncle is the murderer of thy father.—Swear to me thou wilt revenge his death.”

Alphonfus looked stedfastly on his mother in silent wonder.

Anna continued : " Thou marvellest at my words, — thou can'st not think the smooth-tongued Frederic so great a villain ! but he is blacker than thy darkest thoughts can paint him ! — Oh ! I could tell thee " — she paused.

" Explain thyself, my dearest mother," cried Alphonfus.

" No ! I cannot — I will not let thee think so basely of thy father's brother, — time may come, that thou " — she paused a moment, — — " I cannot prove what I've alleged ; therefore bury it in thy breast. — But swear to me, by heaven,

whenever the murderer stands confessed, thou wilt revenge thy father's death."

"Oh, my mother! do you then think I would be careless in so great a point of duty?—No! let me but know him, and by all my hopes of heaven, my sword shall pierce his heart."

"Thou art my child indeed! good angels guard thee," cried the countess, and embraced him. — "Oh thou dost not know count Frederic; but time will teach thee him."

In due time count Frederic arrived; his countenance bore the marks of assumed grief;—Alphonfus could ill brook his presence;—he saw his mother's con-

jecture confirmed;—his tongue laboured to accuse the count of his villany;—his heart whispered him to await the proof of his guilt;—he bit his tongue in silence;—his sorrow burst into his eyes, and he rushed from the apartment inarticulately exclaiming, “Oh! my father!”

Towards the evening the count departed; the old servant who had brought the sorrowful intelligence was ordered instantly to return to the corpse, and get it conveyed to the castle with all convenient speed.

Count Frederic took upon himself to prepare for the obsequies of his brother.

After the departure of count Frederic, Alphonfus strongly solicited his mother to

confide to him her cause for suspecting his uncle; "I must not — cannot," — she replied: "time will develope and prove my words. Oh Alphonfus! remember what you have sworn."

"Sacredly I will maintain my vow."

On the next day, count Frederic again visited the castle of Cohenburg; Alphonfus shunned his presence, and retired on his arrival, to indulge his grief in solitude. After an interval of some time, thinking his uncle gone, he re-entered the apartment where he had left his mother: but what was his surprise, on his entrance, at seeing her kneeling before the count, and kissing his hand — she rose, and threw herself into a chair. — The count walked to the window: — "How does this conduct

agree with the character my mother has given of the count?" thought Alphonfus; — his mother perceived his eyes fixed on her; she wrung her hands, and lifted them in silent supplication to heaven.

In a short time Frederic departed.

"You have commanded me," said Alphonfus, after a pause, "not to ask an explanation of your suspicions"—he was proceeding, when the countess rose from her seat, and bursting into tears, left the apartment.

Alphonfus was stretched on the rack of doubt, suspicion, and perplexity; he traversed the apartment, he threw himself on the ground, he rose again, he walked about the room, he entered the garden;

he walked, he sat: it was in vain; the mind cannot fly from itself.

The countess excused herself from appearing at supper;—Alphonfus knew not that the cloth was spread before him, though he leaned the arm on which he rested his head on the table.

At an early hour he retired to his chamber; it was in vain that he attempted to rest;—he read the letters he had received from his father during his absence; his tears ran swiftly down upon them;—he could read no more,—he threw himself upon his bed;—his lamp decayed in the socket, and the obscurity of the scene seemed in unison with his feelings.

The ghostly hour of midnight had just

founded, and all the castle of Cohenburg was wrapped in sleep, save the forlorn Alphonfus; the balm of wounded nature refused to heal his sorrows. Stretched on his restless bed, he lay ruminating on the occurrences of the preceding day, when a piercing shriek caught his ear, and roused him from his meditations,—it seemed to proceed from the chamber of his mother; he listened—it was not repeated—“Again her grief exceeds the bounds of reason!” he cried,—“Oh wretched woman! Kind heaven sooth her sorrows!” He sighed, dropped a tear, and sunk upon his pillow.

After a short interval, he fell into a restless slumber; he had not long enjoyed this first repose, since his father's death, when he was awakened by the opening

of his chamber-door; the dawn of day was beginning to break, and served to show Alphonfus, that it was his mother who had entered his apartment;—her mien alarmed him, — her eyes were wildly fixed, her countenance betrayed the most visible signs of an agonized heart; she was wrapped in a loose garment, and her hair hung dishevelled on her shoulders.

“Alphonfus!” she exclaimed, “observe thy mother’s words, nor ask their explanation: — instantly fly this castle, nor approach it more, as you value life! — as you value heaven!”

Alphonfus had lain down on the bed without undressing, and now starting from it, — “Why this sudden alarm?” he cried;

"is it that you fear my uncle will perpetrate a second deed, horrid as the first? — fear not for me; I shall live to fulfil my oath."

She shrieked, then said, "You have undone yourself and me — your uncle is innocent — one only way can save us both — fly far from hence — fly from me — fly from your uncle — take that purse, — return not to the castle — saddle the fleetest courser in the stables, and depart while yet the earliness of the morn favours your escape unseen — embrace me — Oh! no! no! no! — it would ——" a flood of tears prevented for a while her farther utterance; she then added, "Go! and may the blessings I can never hope from heaven fall on thee." She gave him the purse; — the palm of her hand

was stained with blood ! Alphonfus looked that he saw it ; speech was refused him ; — the countess met his eye ; again she shrieked, “ Oh, fly and save me ! — I conjure you, fly ! ” — she cried ; and, with a look that seemed to draw blood from her heart, she ran from Alphonfus’s chamber, and locked herself within her own.

Thunderstruck by what he had heard and seen, Alphonfus debated some moments how to act ; at last he cried, — “ Has my unhappy mother lost her reason ? — Oh, no ! her manner is that of deep sorrow, not of frenzy ; she undoubtedly has some strong cause for her commands ; but then why conceal it from me ? — My uncle, too, declared innocent ! — what can she mean ? — it is my duty to obey.” He left his chamber ; as he passed

hers, she opened the door, and said, —  
“Speed thee, my beloved Alphonfus!”  
— He stopped, but she hastily closed it  
again. He descended into the hall, un-  
barred the heavy gates, and proceeded to  
the stables; having saddled his favourite  
horse, he mounted, and with a full and  
forrowing heart left the castle of Cohen-  
burg.

“Fly me, — fly this castle, as you value  
life, — as you value heaven.” These words  
he repeated again and again, — he dwelt  
on them, till conjecture left itself in a  
maze of thought; — he proceeded for-  
wards about five leagues without slacken-  
ing his pace, before he inquired of him-  
self whither he was going, — and he then  
hesitated how to answer himself. In this  
dilemma, he perceived a distant village ris-

ing above some clustered trees on the brow of an easy hill: thither he directed his steed; the villagers were just risen to their labour as he reached it, — they looked at him with an eye of inquisitiveness: — he perceived that they knew him not, but that idle curiosity had attracted their attention; having refreshed his steed, he again set forward, — he wished, with all possible speed, to leave that part of the country where he was likely to be recognised; he felt that he had no cause for wishing to secrete himself, but he felt also, that he should experience an unconquerable embarrassment, should he encounter any friend, who might ask him whither he was journeying, or make inquiries relative to his family.

Towards noon he had proceeded many

leagues into the heart of the country ; his strength and spirits were equally exhausted ; he dismounted from his horse ; and having fastened him to the trunk of a tree, whose branches shaded him from the scorching rays of the mid-day sun, he threw himself down by his side.

Reflection, which clears not the point meditated on, wears away the time sorrowfully, but swiftly :—thus Alphonfus rose not from his bed of grass till the sun was far advanced towards the west ; after riding three more weary leagues, a mean inn, where he meant to pass the night, received him ; he drank a cup of wine, and was refreshed, — it was the first nourishment, except some water which he had drunk at a brook from the hollow of his hand, that had that day passed his

lips ; he ate also, but sparingly, and that without relish. At an early hour he saw his steed safely bestowed, and betook himself to his chamber, though not to sleep.

## CHAP. II.

Caust thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And, with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff,  
That weighs upon the heart ?

MACBETH.

THE night was spent by him, as the day had been pass'd, in vain lamentations and conjectures ; towards morning he enjoyed a short slumber.

On waking, he turned his thoughts to find some means by which he might gain a reputable maintenance in life ; the army appeared to him the most likely to afford him the asylum he wished, and he

trusted to the change of drefs and ffituation, for paffing unnoticed in the world.

The German power was at that period engaged in a war againft Poland, and he refolved to offer himfelf as a volunteer in one of the regiments which were then daily raifing ; for this purpofe he determined immediately to proceed to Berlin ; accordingly, having fettled with the hofit of the miferable inn, he mounted his horfe, and fet forward.

His journey of the preceding day had been partly in an oppofite angle to the high road leading to Berlin : he accordingly ftruck into a bye path, which was to conduct him to the high road.

With mournful thoughts he proceeded

solitarily along, and gained the desired road about the middle of the day.

Two days served to complete his journey; on the evening of the second he entered the busy city of Berlin; he took up his abode for the night in a small inn, and on the following morning made inquiries for a purchaser for his steed; with this he had determined to part ere he entered into the service of his country, well aware that his pay would ill suffer him to support it.

He walked about the city, he admired the public edifices, he inquired who had been their founders and builders; and for the first two days, found a sufficient stock of amusement to divert his thoughts, in some measure, from the sad subject on

which they were too forcibly bent ; but as the novelty of the scene began to subside, reflection returned with redoubled perplexities and griefs ; — sometimes he resolved to return to the castle : — “ My uncle,” he said, “ my mother avows to be innocent, — why should I fear him ? — but still, she conjures me not to see him : — some secret cause doubtless actuates her conduct, — why hide it from me ? — Should she have leagued with him to murder my father ! — have taken him to her bed, and driven me from the castle, that I might not be a witness of her shame ! ” — The thought went nigh to madden him. “ She is not so base,” he cried : “ would she, had this been so, have supplicated the count on her knees ? — it could not have been done to deceive me, for she expected not my entrance. — What cause

could there have been for that mysterious conduct? — for her still more strange appearance on the morning she sent me from the castle? — for the blood that stained her hand?” Imagination could wander no farther: — “Some secret misery wrings her heart, — I cannot alleviate it, or she would call for my assistance, — and I will not aggravate her calamities by disobeying her commands.” He prayed fervently for her happiness, and wafted up his prayers to heaven in a heart-felt sigh.

On the third day after his arrival in Berlin, his landlord found him a purchaser for his horse at a fair price; Alphonfus hesitated to strike the bargain; he had no friend left on earth; it had endeared his horse to him, and he felt a reluctance to part from the last remains of his late hap-

py days. He debated in his mind : — what money he possessed would soon be gone, and then —— ! He cast a glance at the road before him, the path was gloomy — “ He is yours,” he cried ; “ take him, but use him kindly.” He rushed into the house, refusing again to behold his favourite steed. The most needful article was then the last in his thoughts, — he recollected not the money, till the landlord awakened him from his rêverie by pouring it from his hand upon the table.

His first step was now to offer himself for service ; he received the bounty bestowed on a volunteer, and taking the military habit, found it made an alteration in his person which he little expected.

He felt an inexplicable unwillingness

to lead to any discourse which might give him information of the general opinion of the world, if any tale relative to his family was current in it,—but of this he was ignorant; he resolved to drive the subject from his thoughts; it only became the more constant attendant on his solitary moments.

He had been about three months in the service of the empire, when the regiment in which he served, was ordered to march to a village about four leagues east of Berlin, till they should be called into action, for which they were commanded to hold themselves in readiness at a short notice.

In the course of another month they were called to the field; Alphenus was strong, active, and possessed of much na-

tural courage ; he acquitted himself in the toils of war with the most becoming spirit and fortitude, infomuch that he gained the favour of his commanding officer, and was by him promoted in the regiment.

The name of the commander was Arieno ; the Italian name struck Alphonfus ; he was serving in the German army, beloved by his soldiers, had risen to his present rank by the favour of the emperor, fought with peculiar bravery in the German cause, and yet he was palpably an Italian.

Arieno became more and more attached to Alphonfus: he showed him his favour on every occasion. Alphonfus even began to be apprehensive that he was discovered: — but he was deceived.

When the army retired into winter quarters, Arieno invited Alphonfus to pass the winter with him; Alphonfus accepted the offer with gratitude, and retired with Arieno in the quality, as he supposed, of an attendant.

His imagination was pleasurably deceived; Arieno was himself the child of sorrow; — he had perceived by the dejected air, hesitating speech, and pensive mien of Alphonfus, that he was a prey to grief equally with himself: sympathy inclined him to regard the young count, — and the engaging mien of Alphonfus, though his brow was clouded with sorrow, had won Arieno's heart; and he resolved to make him his friend and companion.

The habitation of Arieno was a small retired mansion on the skirts of a village about three leagues east of Franckfort; an old woman, to whom the care of the house had been entrusted during the summer, was the only one of whom the family consisted in addition to the two friends.

Arieno was a man whose person, on first acquaintance, was little prepossessing; but as the virtues of his heart, which was the seat of every good quality, shone forth, he rapidly gained the love and esteem of those who had any knowledge of him: his conversation instructed whilst it pleased the hearer, and Alphonfus hung with delight on his accents, as he spoke of the vicissitudes of life, the fallacy of this world, and the

stability of hopes placed in a future state.

Many days passed, ere Arieno touched on the string which tingled to the heart of Alphonfus; he then thus addressed him, — “ I think, my young friend, there is something in your manner, together with your knowledge of many abstruse subjects, that bespeaks your real rank in life to be far above that in which I first knew you.”

Alphonfus was silent; but his reddening countenance betrayed to Arieno the truth of his observations, who thus went on: — “ Some secret sorrow preys upon your heart; impart to me your cause of grief; I may have the ability to alleviate your sorrows; if not, I will sooth them.

Alphonfus was still silent.

"Do you not know me sufficiently," Arieno continued, "to be well assured, that the interest I take in your happiness, and not the gratification of an idle curiosity, renders me thus inquisitive?"

"Oh, my friend!" cried Alphonfus, taking Arieno's hand, "I owe you more than my gratitude can ever repay:—you are worthy to be trusted with my inmost concerns; but I would rather forego the comforts which I enjoy from your kindness and conversation, than impart to you the secrets of my heart;—indeed, indeed, they must lie buried in my breast."

"Far be it from me to distress you,"

returned Arieno; "fear not a repetition of these words from me."

A long silence ensued.

"You are an Italian," said Alphonfus, breaking silence.

"You are right," said Arieno; "and marvel, I doubt not, at my serving under the emperor of these dominions."

"I must confess, it has often excited my wonder."

"You shall conjecture no longer; my story is short, and I will tell it to you."

"I have no right to expect such a communication from you."

"I doubt not but you have good reasons for your secrecy; I wish my story to be known to the world."

Alphonfus bowed, and Arieno thus began.

"My father, count Arieno, was one of the richest noblemen in the state of Venice; his mansion, which was situated nearly a league distant from Venice, was magnificent in the extreme; his gardens were extensive and beautiful, and his gondolas rivalled in elegance any before seen. At an early age he espoused the daughter of a rich senator of Genoa, whom he had accidentally seen at the carnival: she was an only child; and at her father's death, which happened three

months after her marriage with my father, she inherited his entire property.

“ In the course of six years she brought my father four children, three sons and a daughter ; my sister was the first born, I was the second son, my brother Stefano was the eldest. At an early age my youngest brother died ; at the period from which I date my story, my brother Stefano was in his nineteenth and I in my eighteenth year. Stefano was in his temper haughty, proud, subtle, and very avaricious ; his person was well calculated to hide the deformities of his mind ; he was the darling of his mother, whom he much resembled in disposition ; and she had entire dominion over her husband.

“ In addition to this, when I tell you

that from my childhood my brother showed his dislike of me by every means in his power, I have, I think, said enough to convince you, that my life was far from being enviable.

“ Not far distant from the mansion of my father, resided a widow lady, Signora Bartini, with her two daughters; their fortunes were small, indeed barely sufficient to support them with any degree of credit; but they possessed a treasure, superior to riches, in their beauty and virtue; the eldest captivated a French chevalier; he married her, and she departed with him into France.

“ The youngest, Camilla by name, had given me a wound which it was not in the power of art to heal. Convinced,

however, that the inferiority of her condition in life to my own, would prove an unconquerable obstacle to my espousing her in the eyes of my family, I resolved to bury my passion in my own heart ; — into my eyes it would, however, sometimes force its way ; I even thought Camilla perceived it, and blushed congenial feelings. It was one evening, towards the end of summer, that, as I entered the small garden leading to the house of Signora Bartini (for I sometimes ventured to call, and enjoy the conversation of Camilla), my brother came from the house ; as he passed me, he exclaimed, ‘ My visit is just ended in proper time, I perceive ; ’ and passed on laughing.

“ I had been so much accustomed to taunts of this kind from my brother, that

I heeded but little what he said, and entered the house: I found Camilla weeping by the window, and her mother standing by her.

“ Suspicion, of I know not what, immediately flashed upon my mind in the form of my brother; I tenderly inquired what had disturbed her; her mother gave some trivial and unsatisfactory reason for her tears, and immediately turned the conversation to another subject.

“ I could not conceal the emotions of my heart, and in a short time took my leave.

“ My father, mother, and brother, were just assembled at supper as I joined them.

“ ‘I knew not whether we were to expect the pleasure of your company this evening,’ said my mother.

“ ‘Why, madam?’

“ ‘Nay, perhaps you were not invited with Signora Bartini, and lovers must not be too forward.’ She laughed loudly, and my brother did the same.

“ ‘I bit my lips with rage, then said, ‘I could conceive no impropriety in visiting where my elder brother showed me the example.’

“ ‘They were at a loss for an answer, and again laughed.

“ ‘My father looked sternly at me, and

said, ‘ You had best beware how you marry contrary to my inclinations ; — remember that Camilla Bartini is the last woman I should choose for your wife.’

“ I knew my combat was unequal, and remained silent.

“ I now found myself more disagreeably situated than ever under my father’s roof, and accordingly determined to travel ; I asked his permission ; he readily granted it, and likewise advanced me a handsome sum of money. His easy consent distressed me, though I wished to obtain it ; affection seemed to have no part in so hasty a compliance.

“ I went to Camilla’s house : but what was my surprise to find that she had left

it; she was gone on a visit to her sister in France.—There seemed something mysterious in her conduct; I could not summon resolution to ask signora Bartini to explain it to me. I took my leave of her; and the next morning I departed from my father's mansion.

“ Ten months elapsed, and I heard not from any one of my father's family: I wrote to my mother, to inquire the cause of this long silence, instructing her to direct for me in Sicily. In about six weeks after, I received from her a few lines, informing me that my father had paid the debt of nature, and requesting my immediate presence.

“ I lost no time in reaching Venice, and arrived at my late father's mansion, on the day of his funeral: the will was then opened;

but conceive, if you can, my astonishment, when the following paragraph was read: "To my second son Philip, in consequence of his disobedience to my commands, I bequeath only five hundred zechins, that he may know I have not forgotten him, but wilfully cut him off from all other share of my property."

"It was a bolt of ice shot at my heart—it benumbed my vitals. Muttering curses on the villain who had belied me to my father, I left the mansion, darting a look at my brother, which I gloried in perceiving that he felt.

"I flew to the house of Signora Bartini: a female servant was standing by the door; she informed me, that her mistress was gone to her daughter's in France.

“ ‘ Where does she reside ?’

“ ‘ At Montpellier.’

“ ‘ What is the Chevalier’s name, who married her daughter ?’

“ ‘ The Chevalier D’Albert.’

“ I will not trouble you with my reflections during the time that I was journeying to Montpellier: suffice it to say, that my suspicions were irrevocably fixed on my brother, as the villain who had taken from me the esteem of my father.

“ Arrived at Montpellier, Madame D’Albert received me at the house of her husband.

“ ‘ You will wonder to see me, Madam,’  
I exclaimed ; ‘ but’ ——

“ At this moment Signora Bartini entered the apartment : I saluted her ; she made a sign to her daughter to leave us ; I sat down by her ; I hesitated how to address her. — What I had studied to say during my journey, had now fled from my thoughts, and I could only inquire for Camilla.

“ ‘ Ah ! Signor,’ she cried, ‘ my child will soon, I hope, be well ; the hand of death is heavy on her.’

“ ‘ Till that moment, I knew not what misery was — my other sufferings had been light.

“ I fell from the chair on which I was

feated—a dead coldness seized me; and it was with difficulty that Signora Bartini restored me to life.

“ When she perceived my senses were returned, she cried, ‘ Did you then really love my poor girl, Signor?’ ”

“ ‘ Love her! oh God, grant me words to prove how tenderly I loved her!’ ”

“ ‘ She loved you, but was taught to believe you wedded to another.’ ”

“ This was an additional wound to my already lacerated heart.

“ She then proceeded to inform me, that, on the evening that I had met my brother coming from her house, and found her

daughter weeping, he had been making the basest proposals to my Camilla, and that, fearing her refusal should incense his haughty spirit to any unwarrantable act of revenge, she had removed Camilla to her sister's in France: that Camilla, having heard that I had left Venice, had supposed that I had forgotten her, and given up herself to melancholy; and that, about two months before my arrival at Montpelier, she had received a letter, as from me, informing her that I was married. 'This,' said Signora Bartini, 'has driven her to despair; her faculties are impaired; and we hourly await her death, as the greatest blessing heaven can bestow on her.'

"The letter was shown me:—it was the hand-writing of my villanous brother.

“ I informed her of the contents of my father's will, relating to me ; I showed her how I conceived myself to have been doubly injured by my brother : she sympathised in my fate, and I in hers ; our sorrow flowed from the same source.

“ In the course of that day, my beloved Camilla breathed her last. How shall I relate my anguish on receiving the bitter intelligence ? you, my friend, must conjecture what I have not words to describe.

“ On the following morning, I was permitted to visit her corpse : oh, how altered was her once beautiful countenance ! Oh, my God, what did I undergo during the moments I gazed upon her cold form ! In an extasy of sorrow, I kissed her icy lips. — The scene was too much—it overpowered

me; — I was dragged from her, I know not by what means, never again to behold the innocent and unhappy victim of falsehood, my loved Camilla!

“ When her funeral obsequies were performed, I returned to Venice; a short time developed to me the perfidy of my brother; I learnt that he had gained the credit of my father to my marriage with Camilla, by showing him a forged certificate of our having been united in a parish church at Montpellier: — how did my heart pant for revenge! — cooler reflection taught me not to spill a brother's blood. — I disdained, however, to ask of him the small legacy portioned out to me by my father, and resolved for ever to leave the Venetian dominions; and having passed over into Germany, I offered myself a volunteer in the service of the

emperor. — I have served under him about thirty-two years, and his goodness has raised me to the rank I now hold. — My brother possesses riches; but I enjoy a treasure whose blessings he will never know—an approving conscience.”

Alphonfus thanked him for his recital, sympathised with him in his sufferings, and inquired if he had ever heard any tidings of his brother since the period of his leaving Venice.

“By accident I heard, about fourteen years ago, that he had married a woman of fortune immediately on his father’s death; that my mother had not long survived her husband, and that his wife died in child-birth of her first infant, which was a female; I heard it by means of an officer who had

visited Venice, and mentioned that the discourse of the city, whilst he was there, had turned solely upon the disappearance of the only daughter of one count Arieno. "He is an avaricious fellow," said he, "and was bent on espousing his daughter to a noble as rich as himself, while the poor girl had fallen in love with a German count, whom she had seen at the carnival. Her father forced her to marry the noble; and a short time after she was missed, and no inquiries could discover whither she had fled."—The name of her lover, I think the officer said, was count Copenhurg, a descendent of a noble family of Saxony:—thus providence punished his avarice by depriving him of his only child."

Alphonfus changed colour at the mention of his name; but Arieno perceived it not; and Alphonfus ventured to inquire, what

was conjectured to have been the young lady's fate.

Arieno answered, that she was supposed to have fled with her lover, and eluded the diligence of her father's and husband's search.

Alphonfus's brain was now on the rack to decide on some part of his father's or uncle's conduct, that might tally with this account; his father had never been a sufficient time together absent from his castle to have formed any engagement of the kind; indeed, had opportunity been ever so favourable, he had always loved his mother too tenderly to wrong her in the regard she bore him; — his uncle, he recollected, had been much absent from Saxony about the time mentioned by Arieno; but he had several times at intervals returned to his mansion; and no one had

accompanied him ; — there were no others of their name in Germany ; — he was convinced it was not his father — thus suspicion rested on his uncle ; — his next thought was, whether what he had now heard could by any means be made to account for the death of his father, and the conduct of his mother, or in any way be supposed to be connected with either. — Here thought again lost itself in a maze of uncertain conjecture.

## C H A P. III.

Oh, day and night, but this is wond'rous strange!

HAMLET.

**B**EFORE the time of taking the field arrived, Arieno received information from the emperor, that his regiment was to be mounted for the ensuing campaign. Alphonfus wished for his faithful steed: but it was beyond his reach.

In the spring, Alphonfus and his Italian friend set out from the hospitable mansion of the latter; Arieno thanked Alphonfus for the pleasure his society had afforded him, and gave him a warm invitation to renew his visit the following winter.

About the middle of the summer, Arieno lost his life in an engagement on the borders of the empire; the receipt of this intelligence went nigh to cost Alphonfus his life. On the very same day, a fall from his horse had fractured his sword-arm; and he heard not of the tidings of his friend's death, till stretched himself on the bed of sickness.

It was near the end of the campaign, ere Alphonfus recovered from his wound; and in a very short time after the re-establishment of his health, a decisive victory was obtained by the Germans over the Poles. This put an end to a long and vigorously fought war: most of the newly-raised regiments were disbanded, and every incapable soldier also received his discharge. The weakness which still remained in Alphonfus's arm, made him unwilling to sue for his con-

tinuance in the army ; and he accordingly determined to seek some other means of subsistence, attended with less danger to his already fractured limb.

After much deliberation, he resolved to sue for employment in the least laborious line, which the then lately-discovered silver mine in Bohemia afforded. His regiment had been disbanded at Prague, and thus he had not far to travel, for the purpose of putting his plan into execution. He was readily hired by the contractor for working the mine, and his labour fell short of what he had pictured to himself it would prove ; he had felt much bodily weakness, proceeding from what he had suffered when he undertook the employment ; and, conscious of his own inability, he had exaggerated in idea the labour of the task he had undertaken.

His fellow-labourers worked hard, and earned their pittance with the sweat of their brow; but it was the more sweetly relished by them at their moments of recreation.

They laughed, they sang, they told tales for each other's diversion; they related anecdotes that had fallen within their knowledge; and thus cheerfulness presided in the midst of labour.

They delighted much to hear Alphonfus recount the course of the battles in which he had fought: some amongst them had served, and to them his narrations were peculiarly interesting; and they ever and anon interrupted him to relate some similar circumstances which had occurred during the campaigns in which they had served.

Alphonfus had belonged to the mines nearly a year, when no new workmen having joined them, and their conversation thus beginning to grow insipid, and anecdotes, from often recounting, becoming stale, they resolved that at evening, when their tasks were ended, each miner should in his turn relate the events of his life.

Alphonfus was amongst the first to whom the lot fell to relate their adventures; he easily fabricated a short and simple tale, which served his purpose, and gained neither the approbation nor the contempt of his hearers: he joyed when the task was ended.

A few days after, the lot fell upon a youth, whose mirth had often drawn forth the loud laughs of his companions. —“ Few

words will tell my tale," he said, and thus began:

"My father and mother, good souls, rented a farm of count Cohenburg, in Lower Saxony, near the river Elbe."

Alphonfus was all attention.

"Oh, had he lived yet, I should not have been here! but I might have been much worse off: and so I thank the fates that I am here; and may I never fare worse, pray I. — Well, though my father did not come of a great family, a great family came of him; for, boys and girls, he had fifteen of us." — Here a loud laugh applauded the young miner's wit. — He continued — "Well, as I said before, my father rented a farm of

count Cohenburg; he was very good to the poor, and promised my father he would do something for all his children; — God rest his soul in heaven! — Let me see, I have now worked in these mines two years and a half; it was about eight months before that time, that the count went out to some foreign part, for aught I know; or it might be only to see our emperor; I can't tell, however, about some such thing" —

The suspense of Alphonfus for the conclusion of this tale, may be easily conceived.

"So, on the day he was expected home, news was brought to his castle by old Robert, who went with him, that his horse had thrown him, and killed him, on his way home; and so Robert went back with or-

ders to have the count buried where he died. —Well, now comes the most extraordinary part of my story; the good dead count had a son about seventeen or eighteen years of age, a fine comely handsome youth, not much unlike me,—only he never worked in a mine.”

Again the miners laughed, and Alphonfus heaved an inward sigh.

“ Well, two days after, he was missing, and so was the countess; neither of them to be found, high nor low: now the folks say, the good lady killed her son in a mad fit, for the loss of her husband; and was so vexed at what she had done, when she came to herself, that she killed herself too — and directly after, a ghost began to walk; and

every night at twelve o'clock, it tolls the great bell in the fourth turret, because that is the time she killed the young count."

"Well, and did you ever see it?" cried one of the miners.

"Oh no! no body has gone near the castle since; it belonged by right to the count's brother; and he came to it; but he staid only a day or two; for he saw and heard such things, that he could not bear his own life; and so he discharged all the servants, and locked up the castle gates; and away he went, some folks say, out of the country, and left the ghost to ring away by itself; and I fancy it is pretty safe, for having all the supper the castle walls can give it to itself, for no company will trouble it, I am sure.—Well, so, for want of the count's

help, my father went down in the world ; and so we most of us left him, to seek our own fortunes ; and here am I, a jolly miner : — and though ours is a low calling under ground, I fancy it will bear looking into as well as many great men's upon the surface of the earth."

Here the youth ended his history ; — a murmur of applause ran through the assembly, and they parted for the night.

Alphonfus slept not ; he had now fresh food for unconfirmed conjecture. — A subject which he had not heard mentioned during two years' intercourse with the busy world, he had at length heard discussed in a mine ; this led him to conjecture the story was not in current report. — "The castle deserted ! — yet a bell tolled at midnight !" —

In spirits he had no faith; and what could it avail any human being to live there, retired from the world? nor did he think it possible they could remain there undiscovered.—That his mother was dead, he did not in the least credit; the youth had said the same of him.—He ruminated again and again on what he had heard, but his meditations ended where they had begun.

Some time elapsed ere Alphonfus ventured to question the youth relative to what he had related of his family; and the only additional intelligence he could gain, was that some people suspected count Frederic to be the murderer of his brother, the countess and her son, for the sake of possessing the castle, which descended by the death of count Alphonfus to his son; — “But then, if this was the case,” cried the

youth, "what could make him run away, and leave the whole?"

"Conscience!" thought Alphonfus.—But his mother had declared his uncle innocent; and he was determined not to suspect him whom she had exculpated.

It was one day shortly after this time, that a gentleman travelling through Bohemia, came, attracted by curiosity, to visit the mine; Alphonfus and another miner were deputed to conduct him; the gentleman's servant accompanied him: in passing a deep cavity of the mine, over which a narrow plank was laid, the servant's eyes not being directed to the unsteady board over which he was passing, one of his feet slipped, and, unable to recover his balance, he sunk into the space below. The fall was,

to any one, inevitable death: — he was dashed to pieces.

The gentleman, whose name was baron Kardsfelt, was much affected by the misfortune that had befallen his servant; he had lived with him many years, and had proved himself a faithful attendant.

The baron immediately returned to the surface of the earth, where the first objects that struck his sight, were his own and his servant's horses, fastened to a post at a short distance from the mouth of the mine: a difficulty immediately arose in his mind, how to get the animal he did not ride himself conveyed to the next town; he accordingly offered Alphonfus a liberal perquisite to ride it thither for him; Alphonfus willingly

greed to his proposal, and they mounted, and rode on.

Alphonfus had for some time considered his situation in the mine as a disagreeable one; he had entered into it from the same motive from which he had so long continued in it, — urgent necessity: he knew no other mode of procuring a subsistence, in which he could pass unknown; and yet he earnestly wished again to mix in the world, in the hope of gaining some light on the mystery which continually occupied his mind; accordingly he determined to offer himself to supply the place of the man whose death he had just witnessed.

The baron asked him many questions as to his abilities for filling the office he wished

to undertake, and Alphonfus declared himself capable of every particular: what he had been accustomed formerly to have done for himself, he thought it no difficult matter to perform for another. There was something in his manner of application that interested the baron in his favour; he accepted the offer made to him by Alphonfus, and wrote a few lines to the superintendant of the mine, saying that he should retain Alphonfus in his service.

The baron Kardsfelt was a man about thirty years of age, and unmarried; his manners were pleasant and his temper mild, unless he conceived himself to be ill-treated or affronted; and then his resentment knew no bounds.

He had at this time been on a visit to his

his sister, who was married and resided at Prague, and was returning to his own mansion at a short distance from Inspruck, when the accident took place which introduced Alphonfus to his knowledge. — Returned home, Alphonfus was made acquainted with the duties of his station, and executed them much to the satisfaction of his master, who behaved towards him with great kindness.

Alphonfus frequently visited Inspruck, and never missed an opportunity of starting some subject which he hoped might lead to the mention of his family, but he never heard the name. He was often a listener to the tales of spirits and witches, to which the common people in that part of the country give much credit; but the castle of Cohenburg was never spoken of; and he now began to distrust there being any foundation,

except the imagination of some weak mind, for the tale the young miner had related.

The baron was fond of play, though he never staked large sums, and passed much of his time at the gaming-table. Having one day engaged with a stranger in a game at draughts, his antagonist was accidentally called from the room in the midst of the game. The stranger had been much beaten by the baron: he was chafed by his losses, and, on his return to the room, asserted that the baron had re-drawn his last move. The baron's fiery temper was heated; he rose, drew his sword, and called on his antagonist to defend his assertion: — it proved to the baron a fatal summons, for he received his adversary's weapon in his side.

He was immediately conveyed home,

fainting with loss of blood, and the wound pronounced to be mortal: speech was refused him; he beckoned Alphonfus to his bed-side, and gave him his purse; Alphonfus received it, kissed his hand, and retired weeping. The baron pulled the sleeve of his confessor who stood by him, and pointed to Alphonfus; the friar understood that he asked his protection for him, and answered by a significant inclination of the head: about an hour after the baron expired in great agonies.

Alphonfus gazed at him as he closed his eyes for ever.

It was a lesson to the gamester to play no more.

## CHAP. IV.

Ah me ! for aught that ever I could read,  
Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth ;  
But either it was different in blood,  
Or else misgrafted in respect of years ;  
Or else it stood upon the choice of friends ;  
Or if there were a sympathy in choice,  
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,  
Making it momentary as a sound,  
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream :  
Brief as the lightning in the collied night,  
That in a spleen unfolds both heaven and earth ;  
And, ere a man hath pow'r to say — " Behold !"  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up :  
So quick, bright things come to confusion.

A MIDSUMMER'S NIGHT DREAM.

WHEN the friar had given the necessary orders, and made the proper arrangements for the funeral of the baron, he thus ad-

ressed Alphonfus, — “ Young man, you seem greatly interested in the fate of the baron.”

Alphonfus wept bitterly. Every added pang of sorrow deeply lacerates a grief-worn heart. “ I have lost my only friend !” he cried.

“ Do not despair,” returned the friar : “ the deceased baron has recommended you to my notice : — I will find some means of providing for your future life, be assured.”

These words were balm to the wounded breast of Alphonfus.

“ Farewell,” continued the holy man : “ place your confidence in the will of heaven to repair your loss, and be comforted ;

I will be here again to-morrow." — So saying he departed.

On the following day Alphonfus found himself more composed, and at the appointed hour father Matthias arrived.

" Good-morrow to thee, youth."

" The same to thee, good father."

" You have been much in my thoughts since we last parted. To every one the promise made to a dying man should be sacred, particularly to those of our order. I promised the late baron that I would see you provided for, — I have been revolving my mind the means, and I think I have found them: I myself act as a confessor to the convent of Saint Helena, about a league from hence;

their sacristan has been dead about a fortnight, and they have not replaced him : — should you like to become his successor ?”

Alphonfus readily accepted the offer ; and having heaved a farewell sigh over the body of his rash master, the friar undertook to conduct him that evening to the convent, and at the appointed time they set out together.

The convent of Saint Helena was a large and ancient edifice ; its ivy-grown towers indicated its antiquity, and the figures carved on its walls bespoke the superstition they inclosed.

The friar opened a small door near the chapel, of which he usually carried the key, and admitted Alphonfus into an inclosed

cloister, which led immediately to his apartments; thence a door opened into the hall of the convent: it was spacious, — at the angles were passages leading to the cells of the nuns; and in front, a wide stair-case conducting to the upper range of cells. The apartment in which the lady abbess usually sat, opened into the hall; the friar entered it, and bade Alphonfus follow him: the abbess was alone; father Matthias informed her who the youth was, and she received him graciously. Some conversation then passed between her and the friar in low voices, after which she spoke to Alphonfus, telling him, that, as he was unacquainted with the duties of his office, the porterefs should accompany and instruct him in them for the first three or four days and nights; she then, after some farther conversation on the same subject, and exhorting him to be peculiarly

diligent in his office, rang her bell ; and the portress attending her summons, she was told that Alphonfus came to succeed the late sacristan, was ordered to show him his apartment, and to give him the necessary instructions. Alphonfus followed her out of the room.

The portress was about fifty years of age ; she was deformed, of a tart humour, and an incessant pratler. " Come, follow me," said she, as soon as the door was closed : " I'll show you your room in a minute ; and a good comfortable one it is.— Oh ! bow to the cross, young man, bow to the cross." Alphonfus looked up, and perceived one fastened over the arch under which they were passing ; he obeyed Perilla's commands, and she continued, " Aye, you'll learn all our ways in time, — you'll have a

fine, easy, happy life of it, I'll assure you:—let me see, — vespers are just over; at eight you must ring the bell, and prepare the chapel for prayers before going to bed; then again at twelve, for the midnight prayers; then at six, for matins; and at ten, for mass; and at four, for vespers; and that's all you have to do, except helping me to sweep the chapel, and keeping clean the ornaments; and all the rest of your time is your own."

They had by this time arrived at the apartment appropriated to the use of the sacristan. "There," cried she, throwing open the door, "you'll live like a prince; father Matthias's rooms are on that side of you, and there is mine;" — pointing to the other side; — "and this," opening a door facing them, "is your way into the chapel;

and you must take care that those tapers on the altar never go out; and when they are nearly done, come to me for some more; and now I think I have told you all, so you may come and sit with me till evening prayers if you like it." She proceeded, and he followed her into her apartment.

Perilla had yet a little taste for the world, though she had been thirty years removed from it, and now expected to hear much news of it, from her new acquaintance; but Alphonfus was the worst subject she could have met with for gratifying her wishes: she thought it might proceed from reserve and modesty, as being with a stranger, and immediately began to set him the example of communication, by relating to him various anecdotes of the nuns; at last, interrupting herself, — "There," said she, "the sand

is juſt out, go, and ring the chapel bell.— Oh, here ! but ſtay, ſtay, put on your ſurplice, — it is rather too tight about the neck, but we'll get you a new one ; — come."

She proceeded into the chapel, and Alphonſus, according to her directions, tolled a certain number of ſtrokes on the bell. " Now follow me," ſhe again cried, and Alphonſus obeyed : — they croſſed the chapel. " Here at this door the nuns come in; now you muſt take that baſon of holy water, and hold it for them to dip their fingers into, to croſs their foreheads, and keep them from the influence of the devil while they are at prayers. I'll light the candles at the altar for you, but you muſt do all yourſelf another time."

The nuns entered one by one, and throw-

ing up their veils as they approached the hallowed ground, dipped each a finger in the vase which Alphonfus held. As soon as the nuns were all come in, the portress beckoned Alphonfus to follow her once more; they passed behind the altar, and she instructed him, that he must now assist father Matthias in putting on his sacerdotal robes. Prayers were then chanted by the friar: the nuns joined him, and having sung an evening hymn, received his benediction, and retired to their cells.

Alphonfus then, according to the directions of the portress, put out all candles, save the two never-to-be-extinguished lights; and having locked the chapel doors, again accompanied Perilla to her apartment, where they supped. In a short time, "Come," said she, "father Matthias is in bed: you

must go to." So saying, she gave him a lamp, and attended him to his chamber door, saying, "Good night, remember to wake at twelve."

Alphonfus slept not; he feared being found negligent in his office on the first trial, and only threw himself on the bed. Perilla's loud suspiration, however, soon convinced him that she had done otherwise; nevertheless at a few minutes before twelve she awoke, came to his chamber door, and warned him it was time to ring the bell.

The same ceremonies were repeated as before, and Alphonfus on their conclusion ventured to enter his bed; reflection, and the novelty of his situation, however, suffered him not to sleep soundly,—and when he heard Perilla again moving about, he

arose and met her at the chamber door. Matins were chanted, and the nuns departed as before. "Now," said Perilla, "we must not go to bed any more; it is our duty to sweep the chapel." She then showed him what was required of him to perform, and afterwards set about her own employments.

Alphonfus was as much pleased with his situation as any line of life could, in his present state of mind, have rendered him; it afforded him shelter from a pitiless world, and he was satisfied. Custom quickly reconciled him to the hours of rising; and he even, in a short time, found little need to consult the hour-glass with which Perilla had provided him. The abbess was pleased with his conduct. Father Matthias paid him much attention; he discovered his mind to be in-

formed above his rank in life: he hinted his suspicions to Alphonfus, who confessed their truth, but instantly declared the silence he wished to maintain. The holy father commiserated his lot; he supplied him with books to sooth his leisure hours, and, when his avocation permitted it, gave him his own society.

In the convent of Saint Helena were twenty-six nuns and ten novices; amongst the latter there was one named Laurretta, whose beautifully pensive countenance never failed to arrest the eyes of Alphonfus, as he held the vase of consecrated water. Had he known what love was, he would have felt that she had inspired him with the soft passion: her appearance gladdened his heart, and her departure from the chapel made him only wish for the hour of her return.

About six months after Alphonfus had become an inmate of the convent, as he was one day conversing familiarly with father Matthias, he ventured to inquire of him, who the young novice was that had so forcibly attracted his regard. "Ah! poor child!" said the holy man, "the lady abbess and myself are alone entrusted with the history of her birth; but as I think, from many instances of your conduct that have fallen under my eye, I may venture to trust you with her story, you shall hear it."

Alphonfus bowed acknowledgment for the compliment paid him by the holy man, who thus began:—

"It is now full seventeen years, since, one wet and stormy evening towards the end of December, a faint knock, twice repeated in

a short space of time, called the portress to the grate of the convent; a soft voice entreated shelter from the storm, and mentioned the name of our lady abbess: the portress opened the gate; and a slender figure, a youth as she imagined, clad in the habit of a pilgrim, entered, leaning on a staff; the portress closed the gate, and having conducted the supposed youth into the apartment of the abbess, the stranger had scarcely uttered, 'Oh! protect a suffering woman!' ere she sunk at the feet of the lady abbess.

“ Exhausted by fatigue, and benumbed by the keenness of the element, the stranger was with difficulty recovered from the fainting fit into which she had fallen: after some time she drank a cup of balsamic cordial, administered to her by the abbess; and a flood of tears proceeding from the joy she felt, on the

assurance given her of experiencing that asylum for which she supplicated, eased her full heart. After eating sparingly of the meal that had been set before her, she begged leave to retire to rest, unable to explain that night the mystery which accompanied her arrival in a male habit.

On the following day she was much recovered from her fatigue, and her entreaties were earnestly made to the abbess not to deliver her up to any one who might demand her.

The abbess promised her the full protection of the church ; and perceiving that she was still weak and ill, forbore to put to her any inquiries.

In a few days she was much mended ; but

a deep melancholy, at times approaching to frenzy, clouded her mind; voluntarily, however, she communicated to the lady abbess and myself her afflictions; she afterwards (for she delighted to dwell on her sorrows) wrote down her little history, and presented me with it: there it is, I trust to your discretion not to reveal it out of the convent; peruse it whilst I go and pray by the sick sister, Velina."

Alphonfus promised strict secrecy, and receiving the manuscript from the hand of the friar, retired with it to his own apartment.

#### LAURETTA'S STORY.

"My name is Lauretta. I am the only daughter of count Arieno, resident near Ve-

nice; my mother died on the same day on which I was born; I had a fortune equal to my birth, and many were the suitors for my hand, more of whom I believe were swayed by interest than by any attachment to my person: at length, chance threw in my way count Frederic Cohenburg, a noble Saxon by birth, whom, were I to describe him to you as my burning fancy now paints him to my eyes, you would conceive to have surpassed his sex beyond the limits nature has prescribed; suffice it to say, I thought him all perfection.

“ At first, I vainly imagined that the deference I paid him, proceeded only from my consciousness of his merit; and so far from being singular in my attentions to him, I should have been an exception to the females with whom I associated, not to have

treated him as I did. But alas ! I soon found that my regard proceeded from a softer motive, and I quickly perceived that I adored what others but approved.

—“ The infancy of love is too sweet to be easily shaken off :—at that delightful period, how little are we aware of the many anxious moments its maturity brings upon us ! — fatal enchantment ! how severe a scourge hast thou proved to me through life !

“ A mutual affection glowed in our congenial breasts ; I listened to his vows with rapture, and he heard my promises of constancy with equal delight.

“ But an obstacle, to which the eyes of lovers are seldom open, had planted a hedge of thorns across the path which I vainly

imagined was conducting me to the summit of earthly happiness.

“The only wealth which true love looks for, is an ardent return of affection: in that no one was more rich than my Frederic;—my father, who weighed merit only by wealth, had destined me for the wife of count Byroff, a nobleman of immense property, at that time on his travels; and he commanded me to check a passion grown too incorporate with my blood to hope a cure; nor did I endeavour to effect it; I would sooner have given up life, than to have lived and ceased to love my Frederic. His visits were now interdicted, on pain of my being immediately sent to a convent, if he was again seen with me.—How feelingly did I then taste that the bitters of love are more poignant than its sweets! Still had I not re-

resolution to shake off my cause of sorrow.— If the idea for a moment entered my harassed brain, it was outweighed by the consideration that the uncertain wheel of fortune might one day turn in my favour, and give me to enjoy my Frederic's love without alloy.

“ At length I contrived by stealth to meet him in the garden of my father's sister:— how did the sight of him rekindle the smothered flame!— I again vowed fidelity to him, and imprecated heavy curses on myself, if ever I swerved from the oath I had taken to be his only, and for ever.

“ Not long after this, I was one day sitting alone in my chamber, ruminating on my hard fate, and bedewing with my tears a letter I had privately received from count

Frederic, replete with vows, which, though often repeated, were still new and dear to me, when my father entered the apartment, and informed me that count Byroff was returned to Venice.—How shall I describe to you the pangs that at that moment rent my heart?—how relate to you the tide of grief which burst its way through my swollen eyes?—But I will leave it to be pictured in your susceptible breast.

“Had not the fulness of my heart sealed my lips, the too certain knowledge of my sentence having proceeded from a mouth whence there was no appeal, would have prevented my giving utterance to ineffectual remonstrances.

“In the evening of that day, my destined spouse waited on my father;—I was

summoned to appear; — he rose and took my hand as I entered the apartment; I cast my eyes upon the ground; I could not bear to encounter those of a man whom I considered as the bane of my future peace. — I must, however, in justice to him, say, that, save only one, I never knew a man better calculated to make a woman happy; his address was easy and elegant; his manners conciliating; his person handsome, and his mind well stored with polite and useful learning. He was a man that, had he been my brother, I could have revered him; as it was, in spite of me, I respected him; but with how widely different a passion did he wish to inspire me! and in how mild, how gentle terms did he complain of that coldness with which I treated him! So far did his noble spirit win upon me, that many times I formed the determination of disclo-

ing to him the fatal secret of my heart, and entreating his pity. — Oh, ye powers! why did ye not whisper to my labouring breast the many hours of anguish this confession would have spared me, and the horrid deed that then had never been committed?

At length the day I long had dreaded was fixed upon; and notice was given me the preceding evening, that I was, on the morning of the following day, to accompany count Byroff to the altar. — I fell at my father's feet, and, clasping his knees, conjured him to have pity on me; I endeavoured by the arguments of reason to convince him of the impropriety and cruelty of his commands: I besought him not to harden his heart against the entreaties of an only child; I represented to him the remorse of conscience my future misery would occasion

him, when he considered that he alone had brought it upon me. But his ear was deaf to every voice save that of interest, and casting me from him, he exclaimed, ‘Obey my commands, or cease to be my daughter;’ and, with a frown that pierced me to the heart, left the apartment. — Exhausted with weeping, I sunk into a fainting fit, which lasted some time; as soon as my strength began to return, I took my woman, and, leaning on her arm, repaired to my aunt’s, where I had before met Frederic; I informed her of all that had happened — she sympathised in my distress, but being entirely dependent on my father, durst not exert herself in my behalf; I entreated her to send in search of Frederic: she did so. — After two hours passed in tedious expectation, the messenger returned and informed us that he was not in Venice; he had been absent from it

some days on urgent business, but was shortly expected to return.

“ My aunt promised to send early in the morning, to inquire whether he was arrived, and if he was, to let me know immediately.

“ I returned home like a malefactor, who, knowing his doom to be inevitable, makes no resistance when led to the stake.

“ Entering my father's house, I passed quickly to my chamber, and throwing myself upon a couch, I again gave fresh vent to my tears.— My woman was afflicted at my distress; she had been my constant companion since the death of my mother; she loved, and endeavoured to comfort me: but alas! how vain were her counsels! she could only recommend resignation, where it was

no virtue, and teach me to hope for that interposition of providence, which it refused to grant me.

“ When I became somewhat composed, I began to reason with myself.—‘ Shall I,’ said I, ‘ quit my father’s house, and fly to Frederic?—surely he will receive me with joy, with rapture!’—I reflected a moment; I had been told that men were false, inconstant, and cruel; that those they professed to love in prosperity, were disregarded by them in adversity.—‘ Surely,’ cried I, ‘ Frederic is not one of those!—oh no! what promises has he not made me!—what sacred oaths of fidelity has he not taken!—I will fly to him; he will meet me with transport.’—I sprang from the couch in extasy, and walked wildly about the chamber; when, oh cruel

reflection! I at that instant remembered somewhere to have read, I know not where, that lovers' vows are made only to be broken. — 'Oh heavens! should Frederic think thus,' I exclaimed; 'for who that has ever loved, but has sighed and sworn as he has done? — And shall I then throw myself upon him, to be accounted a burthen by him? perhaps upbraided for my love? — Oh credulity! bane of our sex! why have I so long been thy dupe?' — In a brain haraff-ed as mine then was, any idea, however romantic, is easily admitted; and, half frantic, I loaded the faithful youth with every ob-jurgation my rent heart suggested.

"I fear you will upbraid me with ingratitude, suspicion, and cowardice of nature; I confess to you, I seem to merit the re-

proach ; but the torture of mind I then endured, may well apologise for my strange, and seemingly ungrateful, conduct.

“ The thought of my lover’s infidelity once admitted, I became more calm ; I considered that if the vows of love were disregarded by those who were not compelled to break them, how innocent should I be, whom my relentless fates conspired to force unto it ! — I even became in part reconciled to my approaching marriage. — You will marvel at my words : — but put yourself in my situation ; conceive but for an instant the distracting thought of being abandoned, if not cursed, by a father ; perhaps disregarded by the man to whom you should fly for protection ; cast friendless upon an un pitying and prejudiced world : and the idea of giving your hand to a man whom you had al-

ready begun to esteem, will not appear in so dark colours as you may perhaps have drawn it,

“ I did not retire to rest that night: early in the morning, my aunt sent to inform me that Frederic was not returned. ‘ It is well ! ’ I cried ; ‘ too sure he has forgotten me. Oh cruel, cruel Frederic ! are these thy vows ? is this thy boasted constancy ? ’ All the pleasing scenes of future bliss I had once vainly flattered myself I should enjoy with my Frederic, now recurred to my imagination ; and, in spite of my efforts to coerce them, a flood of tears again burst from me. I continued weeping till my father entered my chamber, and summoned me to attend count Byroff to the altar. ‘ To be forever parted from my Frederic ! ’ returned my heart. All my resolution again failed

me, and I should have sunk senseless at my father's feet, had not the voice of count Byroff, inquiring for me in the tenderest accents, met my ear, and roused me from my lethargy of grief. He took my hand within his—it trembled excessively—he mistook the reluctance with which I suffered him to take it, for virgin bashfulness, and encouraged me with the most soothing expressions of affection.—We entered the chapel, and I returned from it a wife.

“ My doom once fixed, my heart seemed lightened of a heavy weight of anxiety, and I considered it as vain to afflict myself concerning a sentence which was now irrevocably fixed.

“ The day was spent in festivity, and I constrained myself to appear chearful; the

awe in which I stood of my father caused me to wear a smile on my lips, whilst I could not forbear heaving a sigh unheard for Frederic.

“Innumerable were the gifts made me on that day by all my relations: count Byroff presented me with jewels to a vast amount, and many articles of dress not less costly in their kind: even my father’s natural parsimony seemed relaxed; for he bestowed on me a valuable string of pearls, the only ornament I now possess, and which, notwithstanding his unrelenting cruelty, I still hold dear and sacred, in memory of him who gave it.

“Never did woman pass a less joyful bridal day than myself: when the bustle of festivity was subsided, and night again

brought opportunity for reflection, I strongly felt that my love for Frederic had lost no ground in my heart.

“ In the morning, my kind aunt visited me : I inquired eagerly after count Frederic ; — he was not returned.

“ In spite of my exertions to appear lively, I was depressed : count Byroff left no means untried to amuse, and render me chearful. My father, who well knew the cause of my melancholy, let not the first opportunity slip of warning me to beware of raising his anger to a higher pitch than I already had done.

“ About a month after my marriage, my most earnest wishes were crowned with success : my aunt informed me, that Fre-

deric was returned, and half frantic at the intelligence he had given him. My father was luckily from home;—I immediately flew to my aunt's, where I once again beheld my only love. But oh! never was the parting of the most faithful lovers, doomed to weep away a sad and solitary life within monastic walls, more truly affecting than our meeting: my ardent lover gazed at me with a look of sorrow, that penetrated to my inmost soul; my heart shed tears of blood, and, in an agony of grief, I fainted in his arms. On recovering my senses, I entreated him to forgive the rash act into which I had been hurried by the threats of a cruel father, and the vain distrust of my own harassed mind: I besought him to pity me; nay, even more, to love me. Yes, I charged him to love me still, as I still loved him. Do not, I beseech you, misconstrue

the meaning of these words, nor suppose me now a penitent for a crime which, the Supreme of all is witness, was far from my thoughts: my fates, cruel and relentless as they have been, were however satisfied with the resignation of my peace, and spared me the additional sacrifice of my virtue.

“ Oh, Frederic! if some bright star thou reignest on high in yon exalted firmament, look down upon thy faithful Laretta, faithful to thee, even in death, and witness for me the purity of a heart burnt up by love's devouring fire, yet never swerving from the rules of fairest virtue!

“ I continued for some time constantly to meet Frederic at the house of my indulgent aunt, until some circumstances, however trivial in themselves, conspired to in-

form me that our meetings were discovered. I accordingly forebore to see him ; and wrote to him, telling him my reason for absenting myself from my aunt's. A daily correspondence was now commenced between us, which, except that I saw not my Frederic, amounted to the same as if we had met ; as, at our interviews, we had only uttered those lamentations, vows, and promises of fidelity, which were now conveyed in our letters. A faithful servant of my aunt's had the care of receiving and delivering them.

“ About a fortnight after the commencement of our correspondence, I learned that my father and my husband were going a short journey, and would not return for two days. On the morning of the day on which my husband had told me they intended setting out, I dispatched a letter by our trusty

messenger to Frederic, informing him of their intended absence, and that I would that evening meet him at my aunt's.

“ In the afternoon my father and count Byroff bade me farewell, mounted their horses, and set out. In about two hours after their departure, I ventured to my aunt's ; I informed her how things were circumstanced ; she congratulated me on my pleasing prospect of seeing my Frederic, and then inquired for her servant, in order to learn whether he had found Frederic at home ; but our messenger was not returned.

Three hours were passed in anxious expectations and vain surmises : neither Frederic nor the servant appeared : the only conclusion I could draw, was, that Frederic was not in the city, and that our messenger

was gone in search of him. But a short interval convinced me of the horrible reverse. Oh ! picture to yourself my disappointment, my astonishment, my grief, when, hearing footsteps on the stairs, my aunt opened the door of the apartment, and my father rushed in.—I uttered a violent shriek, and fainted at my aunt's feet ; when I recovered, I found myself on my own bed. ‘ Oh, Frederic ! art thou then lost for ever ? ’ I exclaimed ; for the first idea which shot across my burning brain on my recovering my senses, was, that the sword of count Byroff had pierced the heart of my Frederic. How I got this intelligence, I am to this moment ignorant : suffice it to say, it was but too true, and I infinitely miserable. My husband was sitting by my bed-side ; I upbraided him for his unjust cruelty in the most extravagant terms, suggested by my excessive grief :

I laid before him all the history of my love for count Frederic ; I wept, I sighed, fainted, and upbraided him by turns.

“ He informed me that my father had told him, that he suspected I entertained a connection with another man ; which idea he had at first endeavoured to confute ; but my father persisting in it, he had agreed to assist him in making an attempt at the discovery of the truth ; that they had pretended to be going on a journey, under the expectation of my then admitting Frederic into my father’s house ; but that, on the morning of that very day, my father had seized our faithful messenger, and torn from him my letter to Frederic, inviting him to meet me in the evening of that day at my aunt’s : that, having confined the servant, they had found means of conveying my letter to him to

whom it was addressed; and having way-laid him in an obscure street through which they well knew he must unavoidably pass in his way to my aunt's, count Byroff had stabbed him. God alone knows what were my feelings during this recital; and thanks be to him, that the fulness of my heart sealed my lips, or I, in frantic rage, had cursed the author of my being.

“Count Byroff entreated me to be composed; he represented to me, that my sorrow was now ineffectual, since the deed, which he himself avowed to have been rash, was committed. He set before me the resignation I owed to the will of a father, and endeavoured to work upon me, by the shame I should incur in the opinion of the world, if my conduct became publicly known. But I heeded not what he said; I listened with

disdain to words uttered by the murderer of my Frederic. At that moment, I should have scorned the words of an angel, had they been incapable of recalling my Frederic to life.

“ I absolutely refused all nourishment and repose : count Byroff became alarmed for my health ; he continued with great earnestness to urge me to resignation ; made me the most solemn protestations of his love ; besought my forgiveness, and prayed me to tell him how he could sooth my anguish.

“ I was silent, and count Byroff left my apartment : he had not been long gone, ere I commanded my faithful woman, who had been the companion of my sorrows, to go and inform my father and my husband, that I had fallen into a sound slumber ; and warn

them against entering my apartment, lest they should disturb me. Against her return, I had thrown on a long cloak and veil; and, having bribed her to keep my secret, I left the house unobserved. It was about nine o'clock in the evening when I set out: I moved towards the suburbs of the city as quickly as I was able: arrived there, I entered a narrow lane, in which I imagined I recollected the shop of a clothier. I walked down in search of it: to my great joy, I soon found it, and entering, I perceived there to be no one in the shop but an old woman. In imperfect language, intermixed with French, I told the woman I was journeying to Loretto, and wanted the habit of a male pilgrim. She immediately produced several: I purchased one, together with a staff and leathern bottle; and, having tied up my bundle, I left the shop, inwardly rejoicing

that the old woman had been too busily occupied in praising the quality of her goods, particularly to notice me. I again set forward, and in a few minutes arrived in the great road leading from the city.

“Fortunately for me, the rising moon served to show me my way; and being arrived nearly half a league from the city, and perceiving no one near me, I ventured to exchange my garments for the pilgrim’s habit; and having buried the clothes I had taken off under a sod, which I had with difficulty managed to cut up for the purpose of hiding them under it, I once more set forward, intending to journey to this convent, which I had heard my aunt mention, and where I had resolved, if you were so kind as to permit me, to pass the remainder of my days.

“ Under favour of my habit, I travelled hither perfectly to my satisfaction, except the inconvenience I suffered from fatigue ; but your benevolence and care soon brought me to the happy state in which I now find myself : and I trust I shall never prove ungrateful in my acknowledgments to you, and in prayers to the holy saint in whom you confide, to reward you for the humanity you have shown me.”

Here was a part of the mystery, relative to the conduct of the uncle of Alphonfus, cleared up ; count Frederic had loved and been beloved by the niece of his much revered friend Arieno ; she thought him dead, and lived and died secluded from the world, mourning his loss. “ Mistaken woman ! oh that some angel,” cried he, moved by the affecting narration of Lauretta’s hapless lot,

“ had whispered to thee the falsity of that tale which drove thee forever from thy Frederic and the world!—Her loss was surely the cause of the grief which visibly preyed upon my uncle’s heart!—Still this solves not the mystery in which I am concerned.” — He sat a few minutes wrapped in melancholy thought; then returned to father Matthias’s apartment.

“ Well!” cried the holy man — “ I perceive you feel what you have read; — you pity the unhappy sufferer?”

“ Sincerely I do. — Her Frederic was five years since alive.”

“ Myfterious heaven!” exclaimed the old man: “ explain to me, I beseech you, what you know concerning him.”

"Indeed — I cannot now : — the time may come." — He paused.

The father looked disappointed; in a moment he regained his wonted serenity of countenance. "She died," cried he, "as she lived, lamenting the untimely fate of him she loved."

"How long have her cares been ended?"

"Grief wasted her frame to a skeleton, and she has sunk into the grave, now seven years."

"Were any inquiries ever made relative to her?"

"Never."

“ But she mentions nothing of her child, nor have you spoken to me of her.”

“ When she delivered to us the manuscript I put into your hands, she knew not herself that she was about to become a mother. — With tears she some short time after declared her situation to the abbess; and called on heaven to witness that it was the pure offspring of her marriage with count Byroff. — Her sufferings moved the abbess, and she promised to connive at her situation, and protect her child. At the due period of time, she gave birth to a female infant, which received its mother's name; this was to her great joy, for had its sex proved other, it must necessarily have been removed from her at an early age.”

“ And is the young Laurretta destined to

a life of seclusion from the world?" asked Alphonfus.

"Her mother," answered the friar, "on her death-bed, ordained, that, should any part of her family by any means gain the knowledge of her having borne a child, and demand it of the abbess, it was to be delivered up to them; but in case of her remaining here unknown unto her eighteenth year, she was at that period to take the veil, as it was not likely that even she herself would then be remembered by them after so many years' absence; and on no account to inform her relations that a child of hers was in existence; dreading, as she said, that they should think it incumbent on them to take home the child, and either doubting the purity of its birth, or, in revenge for its mother's transgression, use it unkindly."

“Of what age is Lauretta?” asked Alphonfus.

“She has about four months attained her seventeenth year,” returned the old man; “and I trust both her father, and count Arieno, are ignorant that such an angel is in existence. — She has been made acquainted with her own story by her mother: but the colours in which her parent painted to her her nearest relatives, leave her no wish to enter upon a world which she has never known, and of which she has heard so unprepossessing an account: she declares herself perfectly happy within these walls, and prepared to take the veil.”

Alphonfus sighed; his eyes fell on the dropping sand, and it admonished him to ring the evening bell.

## CHAP. V.

————— a matchlets pair,  
With equal virtue form'd, and equal grace;  
The same, distinguish'd by the sex alone:  
Hers, the mild lustre of the blooming morn,  
And his, the radiance of the risen day.

THOMSON.

THE thoughts of Alphonfus were continually fixed on Laupretta; he every day felt a stronger prepossession in her favour; he began to conceive the nature of his regard for her, and wished to snatch her from the eternal gloom of a monastic life: — he longed to impart to her the sentiments with which she had inspired him: all intercourse with the females of the convent, save the lady abbess, and old Perilla, was denied him: —

what means could he pursue to communicate to her his affection, or how did he know she would not disregard, nay perhaps despise him for the confession?

He resolved stedfastly to fix his eyes on hers as she entered the chapel: he was practically ignorant that love has a language of the eyes; but he conceived that the eyes might be made to express what passes in the heart.

He fixed on her countenance his black penetrating eyes: the blush of modesty o'ershadowed her cheeks; she cast her eyes on the ground, and proceeded swiftly along.

He was unacquainted with the sex, and knew not yet to distinguish between diffidence and displeasure.

He repeated his experiment frequently: sometimes it was returned in the same manner as on his first trial: mostly she raised not her eyes higher than the vase, and immediately dropped them again.

“No!” — cried he — “Lauretta feels no sentiment congenial with mine; she even meets my looks of love with indifference. — Unhappy Alphonfus!”

The next time she entered the chapel, he resolved not to raise his eyes to hers: a broken sigh burst from his heart. Lauretta sighed also. Alphonfus heard the sound, — it tingled on his heart.

He ventured once more to meet her blue eyes: he imagined a faint blush tinged her

cheeks, and a soft smile stole over her countenance.

It was a confirmation of Alphonfus's most exalted hope. "She fees, and is not insensible to my fondest wishes!" he exclaimed. "Oh extasy incomparable!"

How light a breath turns the wavering balance of a lover's hopes and fears!

Fearless, he now met her eyes: her diffidence gradually wore off, and she encountered his fond glances with delight.

A method of conversing with her now entered his mind: he wrote to her the fondest declaration of his love, that the desire of its return could dictate: — he held his letter by the side of the vase; and as she

extended her finger to touch the water, he slid the paper unobserved into her hand.

Three days elapsed ere he was released from the torture of suspense; on the third, at evening prayers, she put a note into his hand, containing these words, — “ Oh, Alphonfus, what a conviction of the state of my own heart has the declaration of yours proved to me! — Oh, let it remain a secret to all besides ourselves! — Be cautious how you write to me again, — we shall be suspected!”

Alphonfus was truly happy for the first time; but extasy will cool, and bring time for reflection. It told him that he might never be more closely connected with Lauretta than at that moment.

About five months after this time, the lady abbess was seized with a violent illness. The friar, who was also the administerer of physic in the convent, was an unremitting attendant at her bed-side: in a few days she died, lamented by all the convent, and particularly by Lauretta, to whom she had been a second mother.

Her corpse was placed in its coffin, before the altar of the church; masses were performed three times each day for nine days successively, for the benefit of her soul; and three nuns and a novice alternately watched over her body for the same space of time.

Alphonfus thinking an opportunity might now be given him for presenting Lauretta with a letter, wrote one, informing her that he was the nephew of her deceased mother's

beloved Frederic, and entreating her to agree to leave the convent with him on the first opportunity that should offer, — calling on heaven to witness the sanctity of his intentions.

On the evening of the fourth day, Lauretta was returning from her duty of watching the body, as Alphonfus was entering the chapel: she followed the nuns; — they had turned the angle of the chapel door, and Lauretta was in the door-way when Alphonfus met her. He cast a hasty look round, — saw no observing eye, — snatched her hand, — imprinted on it a fervent kiss, and put into it the letter. — The whole was the transaction of a moment.

The funeral obsequies of the abbess were performed at the stated time, with all the

pomp of religion and superstition ; requiems were chanted the whole night by the friar, and all the nuns and novices. It was morning ere they left the chapel ; they were fatigued by their nocturnal worship ; they rejoiced when it was ended, and retired hastily from the chapel. Lauretta contrived to be the last ; she dropped a piece of paper ; Alphonsus flew and hid it in his bosom.

“ Explain to me, whither thou would’st fly.”

He read it, — kissed it, — read it again, and tore it.

After much deliberation how to act, whether again to write to his beloved Lauretta, and inform her of the particulars of his unfortunate story, or only urge her to fly with

him from the convent, he resolved to impart the whole of his history to father Matthias.

Accordingly he waited with impatience an hour when the old man was alone ; and having entered his apartment, he hesitatingly informed him that he had a tale of confidence to impart to him, — which the holy man sacredly promised to bury in his own breast. Alphonfus then related to him every event that had occurred to him since his entrance into life. Having ended the narration, — “ Now, good father,” he cried, “ canst thou solve the mystery that preys upon my breast ?”

The holy man sat some minutes wrapt in thought ; then, raising his eyes to Alphonfus, and marking his breast with the sign of the cross, he said, “ Heaven forbid I should ac-

cuse any one unjustly ! what I am about to say, is solely conjecture. Thy mother was frantic with grief, and had resolved on suicide."

Alphonfus shuddered at the idea : after a pause, he said, " But, father, her hand was bloody !"

The father paused an instant ; then said, " She had grasped, in a moment of phrensy, the instrument she had destined for her destruction."

" Why did she send me from her ?"

" Doubtless," returned the friar, " she forcibly felt the shame that would follow the act she was about to commit, and feared it would descend on her innocent son."

"Do you then impute to the same cause her accusation of my uncle, which she afterwards recalled?"

"I do."

"But, father, why has my uncle left the castle of Cohenburg?"

"His mind is open to sensibility; and the remembrance of those who had so lately inhabited it, rendered it unpleasant, and he doubtless retired to his own mansion."

"But why has he never inquired after me?"

"His inquiries may have escaped you."

"Your suppositions," cried Alphonfus,

"are good: you consider circumstances; you know the nature of mankind: they may be just; but a heart, harassed as mine has been, pants for certainty."

"It will be difficult to attain it."

"Within these walls, I grant it."

"You do not wish to leave them?"

The hesitating silence of Alphonfus spoke for him in the affirmative.

"Your uncle, and the castle of Cohenburg," continued the friar, "are interdicted to you by your mother."

"But surely," interrupted Alphonfus, "it

is not disobedience to act in opposition to the commands of a frantic parent?"

"You just now alleged, Alphonfus, and with reason, that my words could only proceed from conjecture."

Alphonfus felt the force of the friar's remark. The tears started in his eyes, and he exclaimed, "Oh! father! I cannot taste peace of mind till I gain some light on this mystery. — I am an unfit subject for the offices of religion, — my thoughts are too much centred in the world."

"How can you gain information but by visiting the castle? — and then how know you that your pains might not prove futile?"

"No! I would only mix with the world;

the possibility of hearing what I so earnestly desire would keep hope alive : here it lies buried, and I have no pleasing thought to cheer me."

" Whither would you go ?"

" I have resolved to become a fisher on the banks of the Inn."

" The solitude in which you will there live, will soon cause you to regret the happy station you wish to relinquish."

" I feel I was born for society ; not to live with men alone, but to enjoy the soothing of the softer sex."

" Beware of your choice."

"I would have you approve it."

"I am secluded from the world."

"But you intimately know her on whom I doat."

"Oh, shame! shame! Nurtured within our convent walls, art thou the man to wish to break their sacred laws?"

"Lauretta Byroff is not bound by them."

"Have you ever conversed with her?"

"Never."

"How then can you tell her feelings are congenial with yours?"

"Be assured they are."

"I have promised her dying mother, that to no one, but her near relations, I will deliver her."

"And should you then hesitate to deliver her to me?"

"You are not allied to her in blood."

"It is in your power to set all consanguinity a degree below me."

"Explain thyself."

"Make me her nearest relative;—your promise is fulfilled, and I am blessed."

Father Matthias paused awhile; he then

said, "What would the world say, should it ever be known that the descendants of your two noble families were living in the obscure and humiliating situation you have mentioned?"

"Oh, father! what have those whom the world has so hardly dealt with, to do with its censure? — I am well convinced that happiness is not confined to an elevated situation in life."

"Nor," returned the old man, "is it always to be found in an humble state, answerable to the expectations of a warm lover." Father Matthias again paused, then added, "Have you explained your fortunes to Lairetta?"

"No."

“Declare them to her.”

“But how, good father? — teach me the means.”

“This night I will conduct her to my apartment, there thou shalt meet her. — If she consents to share them (and I will pray that heaven guide her tongue for her true felicity), I will not be the means to funder those whom it has joined. — But mark me, if she refuses thy suit, instantly she takes the veil. — I am hasty in this affair. — I feel an interest in your fates; and what is done must be concluded ere the arrival of our newly-chosen abbess.”

Alphonfus kissed the friar's hand, and he made a sign to him to leave him.

When evening prayers were ended, and Perilla was retired to bed, father Matthias stole softly to the cell of Laupretta, and told her to follow him to his apartment. She was reading; but having laid down her book, and taken up her lamp, she drew down her veil and followed him. He stopped at the door of Alphonfus's apartment, and pointed to Laupretta to enter his; she did so, and in a few minutes Alphonfus was at her feet.

Joy and surprise made her hesitate to determine whether what she saw was a vision, or him she really wished it to be.

The first moments, on the part of Alphonfus, were given up to extasy; but he considered that the time allotted to him was

short, and that he had much to communicate; he accordingly began by imparting to her the indulgence of the good confessor, proceeded to the narration of his own life, and, lastly, recounted the plan he had formed for their mutual happiness, if she deigned to share it with him.

Her eyes spoke the consent that virgin bashfulness prevented her tongue from uttering;—she blushed:—he urged the friar's words—the shortness of the time allowed her for the consideration—the possibility of their being separated for ever.—Her tender heart melted at the idea;—her lips expressed the words her voice scarcely sounded.—The enraptured Alphonfus sealed the sacred bond with an extatic kiss.

Quickly after the friar entered, to warn

them that the hour of twelve was near at hand; and he read in the eyes of Alphonfus the result of his conversation.

Lauretta returned to her cell, promising to visit the father on the following morning; and Alphonfus entered the chapel to prepare for midnight prayers.

Alphonfus and Lauretta passed the night in sleepless dreams of happiness to come.

At the appointed hour, Lauretta repaired to the apartment of father Matthias; he asked her confession—her heart was spotless, except a chaste and hidden love long entertained for Alphonfus, could be charged on the score of blame: he then represented to her the wayward fortunes that befall alike the good and evil in the world, upon which

she was about to enter; he set before her the trials that all who live in it must sustain; he charged her well to consult her heart, that she might not, when too late, blame herself for an act which could not be recalled.

She did consult her heart, and found it firm.

The father had already conversed with Alphonfus to the same purpose; he was stedfastly fixed on again braving those vicissitudes of life to which he had already been exposed.

The old man now rose, and called Alphonfus into his apartment.

Alphonfus quivered with extasy.—Lauretta trembled, she knew not why.—She wept.

Father Matthias again exhorted them to reflection ere it was too late.

Their eyes met each other's; Laretta's tears were dried, and Alphonfus ventured to answer for them both, "that they were resolved."

The indissoluble knot was tied.

"The grace of God shine upon you, my children!" cried the old man.—Alphonfus embraced his bride, while tears of joy sparkled in his eyes.

"To-morrow morning, with the dawn of day, you must leave these walls," said the holy man; "now retire to your respective apartments, and each collect together what little articles you may possess of value."

They followed his directions.

During the course of the day, the friar informed such of the nuns as were acquainted with Lauretta's story, that she had been summoned to leave the convent by her nearest relation; and they bade her tenderly farewell.—"She will depart early in the morning," said the old man; "and we shall, I fear, experience a double loss; for our young sacristan, wishing again to mix with the world, will leave us at the same period."

Perilla expressed much astonishment at his being dissatisfied with his present station, — told him, "he would find it difficult to meet with such another;" gave him "some lessons for his good," as she was pleased to term them, and comforted herself with the hope that his successor would prove more

communicative, and thus a companion suited better to her garrulous taste.

On the following morning, after matins had been chanted, and the nuns had again returned to their private devotions in their respective cells, and Perilla was busied in sweeping the chapel, father Matthias went to the cell of Laurretta, and, having directed her to habit herself in the pilgrim's dress in which her mother had arrived at the convent, and which was now in Laurretta's possession, he led her down into the hall. Here she was met by the anxious Alphonfus; — "Accept that small purse of gold," said the good old man: "it may benefit you, my children; with me it lies useless." — They kissed his extended hand: — he gave them his last benediction, and unbarred the heavy gate. — Laurretta dropped a parting tear. —

Alphonfus exclaimed, "Farewell, my kind friend!"—The old man raised his eyes and hands to heaven; then closed the gates on them for ever.

## CHAP. VI.

Which is the villain? Let me see his eyes;  
That, when I note another man like him,  
I may avoid him.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

SUPPORTING herself on the arm of Alphonfus, an hour's journey brought Lauretta to Inspruck; where, wishing to avoid the questions of those who might perceive she was newly entered upon the world, she wisely concealed the surprise which was excited in her breast on beholding scenes to which she had hitherto been totally a stranger.

After a short repast, the travellers again set forward, and arrived about an hour after mid-day at the spot where Alphonfus had

determined to fix his residence. — A small inn received them for the night, and in the morning Alphonfus repaired to the owner of the houses on the border of the river. Having bargained for the hire of one of the most commodious dwellings then vacant, and purchased the freedom of exercising his intended trade on the river, he next provided himself with the necessary implements for earning his subsistence; and in a few days entered upon the employment he had chosen for that purpose.

Fortune smiled on his endeavours; his Lauretta was the solace of his unemployed hours; and he enjoyed as great happiness as the mystery which had reduced him to his present humble situation could suffer a thinking mind to enjoy. — Retired from the world,

not possessing either those riches or vanities which excite the envy of its inhabitants, Alphonfus and his Lauretta had hoped to live free from its cares and inquietudes; but they were quickly doomed to experience how short is the durability of human felicity, even in its humblest state.

The proprietor of the estate on which Alphonfus rented his humble habitation, was the baron Smaldart: he was a widower, whose wife had died in child-bed together with her infant. He was a man remarkable for his benevolence, hospitality, and mildness of temper.

His only sister had espoused the chevalier D'Aignon, a native of Burgundy, who, having been killed by a fall from his horse a

short time after the death of the baroness Smaldart, madame D'Aignon had ever since resided with the baron.

Theodore, the son and only offspring of the deceased chevalier, now in his twentieth year, had for some time been receiving his education in France, and was expected shortly to return to his uncle's. His mother awaited his return with all the ardour of prejudiced fondness; but she was not permitted again to behold her son. She had for some time been slightly indisposed; and one morning, about the time of Theodore's expected arrival in Germany, was found lifeless in her bed.

This was a stroke which severely affected the baron: since the loss of his wife, his sister had been his constant and much-beloved companion: they had been strongly at-

tached to each other; and he had earnestly wished that she might survive him.

At the appointed time Theodore arrived at Smaldart castle: but how great an alteration had taken place in him in the space of five years! When a youth, his every wish had been anticipated by the false indulgence of a kind uncle, and a doating mother; but still his manners had been then unaffected, his deportment unassuming, and his mind untainted with vicious habits. But now he was become haughty, impetuous, confident of his own opinion, and eager to give it unasked. The pecuniary allowance made him by his mother had enabled him to pass the greater part of the time allowed for his education, in a variety of dissipation: thus the acquisition of knowledge had been utterly neglected by him: nor was he himself con-

scious of his deficiency; having been hitherto connected with a set of men too sensible of their own interest not to pay implicit deference to his opinion on every occasion.

The baron had promised himself a pleasing companion in his nephew: he had expected to reap edification and amusement from the conversation of his well-informed mind; and hoped to find in him a willing partaker of such diversions as the country afforded.

How mistaken were his expectations! Theodore's conversation consisted only in boasting of disgraceful exploits, in which he was careful to hold himself up as the principal actor; and the only amusement he found in the sports of the country, was to make their pursuit a plea for injuring the

lands of those who, from their dependence on his uncle, he well knew would not venture to seek redress. In short, had he aimed at making himself the object of general contempt and hatred, he could not have pursued steps that would more satisfactorily have gained him his wish.

He often averred that he despised the good opinion of inferiors; and his actions plainly showed that he would submit to any meanness to gain a smile of approbation from a superior in rank.

At the time of Theodore's arrival in Germany, Laretta was in an advanced state of pregnancy: but she appeared not the less fascinating in his eyes; and, from the first moment of his beholding her, he marked her out for his lustful prey.

A mode of conduct but too common in life was now adopted by him: he used every means to show himself the friend of the husband, while he was labouring to become his blackest enemy. Often did he, by the most seductive flattery, make in imagination a step towards the heart of Lauretta; and as often did her awful virtue cause him to retrace his visionary path.

The perceptive mind of Alphonfus could not long remain ignorant of the hidden villany of the young chevalier; but, conscious of the strict chastity of his Lauretta, he determined to appear not to notice the actions of Theodore, whilst he in reality kept the strictest watch over them. His mind recoiled from being daily obliged to increase a debt of gratitude to a man who was studying to wound him in the tenderest part;

but policy forbade him to refuse obligations he had once accepted, lest he should open to the chevalier the discovery he had made, and his measures become more determined.

At the expected period Laurretta gave birth to a female infant, whose being was but that of a few hours. Laurretta was much affected by the loss of her first-born: Alphonfus, though he rejoiced at the safety of his wife, dropped a tear in sympathy with her sorrow at the fate of his child.

Theodore appeared daily at the cottage of Alphonfus, making the most solicitous inquiries relative to the health of Laurretta, and offering to her, by means of her husband, the most liberal presents, which Alphonfus was slow to accept, and that sparingly: — of a refusal he saw the bad consequences.

In the summer, Alphonfus was frequently kept out nearly half the night by his occupation; but he dreaded not that his Lauretta would then suffer from the persecutions of Theodore, as he had never visited his cottage in an evening; and more particularly as he well knew the gates of the baron Smaldart's castle to be closed at an early hour.

The conduct of Theodore was, however, becoming daily more alarming to the timid Lauretta; and she obtained a promise from Alphonfus, that, if the chevalier persisted in it, he would appeal to the well-known humanity of the baron.

It was one night, not long after this time, that Lauretta, still weak from her late indisposition, having retired to rest before the return of her husband, was roused by the

cries of a girl, whom Alphonfus had procured for her as a nurse and companion in his absence, calling out that the house was on fire; and the girl immediately ran out to procure assistance.—Lauretta, springing from the bed, threw on her clothes as quickly as her alarm would permit her, and was rushing towards the door of the apartment, when Theodore stood before her. She shrieked, and endeavoured to pass him: he seized her hand, and exclaiming “my lucky stars are at length predominant,” dragged her into the outer apartment.

Lauretta again raised her feeble voice; but, alas! her cries, had they been heard, would have been thought to proceed from her alarm on hearing the cry of fire. “Oh God of mercy, assist me!” she cried. “Oh my Alphonfus, where art thou?” and,

raising her eyes, which had hitherto been averted from the furly smiling Theodore, she perceived, standing near the door, two men, whose scowling mien and haggard looks terrified her more than the villain who held her; and she again uttered a faint cry.

Theodore cast at her a look of mingled triumph and contempt; and, waving his hand to the men, they approached Laretta. She again struggled to release herself from Theodore; but the effort overpowered her, and she fainted in their arms.

## CHAP. VII.

Eye me, blest'd Providence, and square my trial  
To my proportion'd strength.

MILTON.

LAURETTA, on recovering her senses, found herself in total darkness; and, by the motion which she felt, concluded she was in some vehicle, which was drawn swiftly along. It was some time ere she recollected the situation in which she had last seen the light, and she then exclaimed, "Gracious heaven, where am I?" No one answered. She extended her hand; it fell upon the hilt of a sword, and she immediately heard a rough voice, between sleeping and waking, mutter some words which she did not understand.

The image of the men who had so greatly alarmed her, recurred to her, and she shuddered.

The person who sat by her yawned, and turned himself towards her.

The night, although summer was far advanced, was damp: Laretta was unaccustomed to the night air — she trembled with cold — and her teeth chattered violently.

Her companion again yawned; and then asking her, whether he should throw his woollen wrapper round her, relieved her from the apprehension under which she had at first laboured, that Theodore was the person who wore the sword she had accidentally touched.

That poignant anguish of mind which refuses to relieve the sufferer by an effusion of tears, is seldom more favourable to the utterance. Such was the grief of the unhappy Lauretta: her repeated attempts to articulate were ineffectual, and the pangs of her heart were redoubled by her involuntary silence. The tears, at length, as expressive of the painful efforts which produced them, stole singly down her cold cheeks, and with difficulty she again stammered out, "Where am I?"

"I must answer no questions," returned the man. His voice was hoarse, but by no means so blunt and harsh as Lauretta's fears had led her to expect.

"Whither am I going?" cried Lauretta.

This demand was thrice advanced, but no answer returned.

"Is the chevalier D'Aignon here?" she then asked.

"No," replied the man. "I believe I may venture to tell you, he is at the castle."

To no other question could she obtain the slightest answer: she knew not what to hope or what to fear; the gloominess of the night added greatly to the depression of her spirits, and the predominant idea within her breast was, that her companion was hired by Theodore to be her murderer, in revenge for his slighted love.

Her companion in a short time after addressed her; and, attributing her anxiety in a

great measure to the chill, which, by the chattering of her teeth, he found still hung upon her, pressed her to taste some brandy out of a flask which had been almost unremittingly applied to his own lips.

Lauretta was insensible to his attentions. "Oh Alphonfus!" she cried, "shall I never again behold you?"—A flood of tears followed the exclamation, and her sorrow rose almost to phrenzy.

After three hours passed in a suspense more poignant than a certainty of suffering the most dreadful calamities that could have befallen her, the vehicle stopped.

Her companion immediately sprang up, and pushing past her, opened the door, and gave her into the arms of his comrade, by

whose side stood another figure, holding a lantern.

The man who had received her into his arms, conveyed her into the kitchen of a miserable inn, of which it was difficult to say, whether poverty or dirt was the leading feature : he placed her in a chair, and then returning to the door, saluted the landlord with a volley of oaths, which conveyed the double meaning, that the horses were in want of provender, and his flask void of brandy.

He then approached the fire, and kicking away a dog which lay sleeping in the corner of the chimney, seated himself by Lauretta.

His companion now entered, and placing

himself opposite the weeping fair, she imagined she perceived a faint gleam of pity shine in his eye. To avail herself of the moment in which she fancied she saw his heart open to the dictates of humanity, was her immediate resolution; and falling on her knees before him, she entreated him to have pity on her helpless situation, and restore her to her Alphonfus. Ere he could answer, she heard his comrade start from his seat, and turning round her head, she observed that he had drawn his sword nearly out of the scabbard. All her fears now seemed verified; she seized the hand of him before whom she was kneeling, uttered an hysterick shriek, and sunk senseless on the floor.

When she revived, she found herself still on the ground, with her head reclined on the

knees of a woman, whose expanded features and brawny limbs seemed to deny her sex.

Whilst Laupretta had continued in a state of insensibility, the hostess had carefully chafed her temples with strong liquors, and now seeing life returned, pressed her to fortify her stomach with a dram of the same cordial, which she had before outwardly administered.

She was now again placed in the chair which she had before occupied, and casting her eyes round, she perceived that several other men had entered the kitchen: amongst them sat the ruffian who had lately given her so much cause for alarm; but she saw not him who had been her companion in the vehicle.

Her fainting fits, together with the extreme agitation of her spirits, had brought on a violent pain in her head; and unable any longer to support her drooping frame, she requested the hostess to conduct her to a bed; but with this petition, Kroonzer, the rufian of whom Laurretta stood in so great dread, absolutely commanded her not to comply, saying, he must depart in a very short time. The hostess, though of so masculine a figure, seemed not devoid of the feelings of her sex, and now cast a look at Laurretta, which speakingly informed her, she wished to accord in her request, but durst not, from the awe in which she stood of Kroonzer.

After a short interval, Kroonzer ordered the host to bring out the horses and prepare for their departure: his commands were instantly obeyed.

Again lifted into the vehicle, how great were the apprehensions of Lauretta, on perceiving Kroonzer enter after her, together with another man, on whose countenance the light which proceeded from a lantern held by the host, falling, it appeared, if possible, more savage than that of the furly Kroonzer.

They again proceeded swiftly along, and for a length of time a strict silence was observed, not less by the men, than by Lauretta.

The faint taints of saffron hue which now began to streak the clearing sky, afforded extreme delight to the overburdened heart of Lauretta. She considered, that, had these men received orders to destroy her, they would in all probability have executed the deed, whilst

the darkness of the night enabled them to evade the eye of man.

The first objects she descried by the rising light, were distant mountains, whose towering summits were rapidly gaining the gilded tinge of advancing day. — The tract of land over which they were journeying, was heathy and barren, save where, at intervals, some small clusters of unproped vines grew spontaneously on the shelving hillocks.

Her fortitude in some measure returning with the much-wished-for light of day, she ventured to inquire, “whither she was going?” — “Not above a league further now,” cried Kroonzer, “whatever we may do at night.” — And from this answer she hesitated not to conclude, that, wherever she was about to be conveyed, Theodore, appre-

henfive of a refcuc, had cautioned her conductors againft travelling in the day-time.

The road now turned into a valley : on the left lay high mountains which were fpeckled with cattle of various kinds ; on the right, irregular lines of lofty chefnut and beech trees : it now wound round the mountain, and the fun burft full upon them between the boles of the trees. Never before had its chearing rays fo greatly exhilarated the heart of her who now hailed its return from the bofom of the deep.

A few moments brought them to the extremity of the vale, and they entered upon a fmall but thickly planted foreft ; the ground was covered with furze, through which, as there was no diftinct path, the vehicle found a difficulty in paffing : at length turning an

angle, Lauretta suddenly perceived a thatched cottage: here the vehicle stopped, and Ralberg, for such was the name of Kroonzer's comrade, having alighted, announced their arrival by a thundering knock with his fist at the door. It was opened by a man half dressed, whose appearance was that of a peasant, and Lauretta was conducted into an apartment which served for the double purpose of kitchen and chamber to the countryman and his wife, who, when they entered, was in the act of dressing behind a ragged curtain, which but ill concealed her from her newly arrived guests.

Lauretta, unable to stand, insensibly seated herself on a bench, which encircled half the fire-place, — unmindful of Kroonzer and his comrade, who had entered into close con-

versation with the countryman in low voices.

The good woman was no sooner habited, than advancing from behind her flimsy retreat, she began with an apology to Lauretta for not having been up ready to receive her, and ended by requesting her to accompany her to a better apartment. Lauretta, with tottering and uncertain steps, followed her hostess up a few stairs, scarcely superior either in breadth or safety to a ladder, and arrived in a small room, the furniture of which consisted of a mean bed, a disabled chair, and a large box, which served at once for a wardrobe, a seat, and a table.

Having closed the door, and pointed with half a courtesy to the only chair, Bartha again apologised for not having been risen

to receive her; but alleged that she had arrived somewhat earlier than her husband had said he expected her.

“Were you then apprised of my coming?” asked Laupetta.

“Oh dear heart, yes,” replied Bartha; “and so I got this chamber ready for you; for I said to Ugo, — lack-a-day, said I, she will be forely tired with journeying all night, and glad to rest her wearied limbs, I warrant me.”

“Oh!” cried Laupetta, clasping the hand of old Bartha, as she stood by her side, — “if you are acquainted with the purpose for which I am brought hither, for the love of God, I conjure you to inform me.”

“The Holy Virgin wots, I know not,” returned the woman.

“But, tell me, whither I am to be conveyed,” continued Laupetta; “one of my guards insinuated that I am not to remain here longer than to-day.”

“Ah! lack-a-day!” cried Bartha, “I know not indeed! Ugo says, women are tattlers, and should not be trusted with secrets. I pressed him hardly to tell me on what account you were coming hither; but he would not.”

“Gave he no reason?” — inquired the disconsolate fair.

“No, by the saints, did he not. He only said, ‘Bartha,’ — said he, ‘ask no questions;

no harm is going to be done to any body ;  
fo make yourself easy."

"In what manner was he informed that I  
was going to be brought hither?" asked  
Lauretta.

"By my troth, I know not," answered  
Bartha. "He told me of it last night, when  
he came from work in that little forest you  
see there : he is a wood-cutter."

"Could you find any method of convey-  
ing a letter for me to my friends?"

"Not unknown to my husband, if it be  
far from hence."

"The estate of the baron Smaldart, on  
the borders of the river Inn, is the place I  
allude to."

“Lack-a-day, good foul, that is many leagues from hence ; and I never go farther than the next village.”

Lauretta hung down her head and wept, and Bartha left the apartment.

Unable to taste the refreshments with which Bartha in a short time returned, Lauretta threw herself upon the bed ; and although she had never pressed bedding so hard and uncomfortable, the fatigue she had undergone soon closed her eyes, but not to peaceful slumbers: the scenes through which she had so lately passed, returned to her flurried imagination in more terrific colours than the reality had appeared to her, — now exaggerated by sleeping fancy.

## CHAP. VIII.

————— Patience and sorrow strove  
Which should express her goodliest.

LEAR.

THE day had been close and sultry ; towards evening the sky began to lower, and the clouds seemed big with an approaching deluge of rain. Lauretta observed them with sensations of melancholy pleasure ; the gloom in which all nature was clad seemed in unison with her feelings : she contemplated the scene before her, till, thought rising successively on thought, she became almost insensible to her own situation. Her reflections were at length interrupted by the entrance of Bartha, who brought her a cup of

new milk, some fresh gathered fruit, and a slice of coarse bread, of which she entreated her to partake, as Kroonzer and Ralberg purposed proceeding on their journey in half an hour's time.

Lauretta, in order to please her kind hosts, rather than to satisfy the calls of nature, which were blunted by extreme grief, tasted the fruits, and sipped a small quantity of the milk, whilst Bartha again called forth every argument with which she was acquainted, to persuade Lauretta, that, as her husband had said she had nothing to fear, she was sure she had not. But this reasoning appeared to Lauretta, although she attempted not to confute it, too weak to afford her any solid consolation.

The voice of Kroonzer now called upon

her to descend. The feeble resistance she could make, she well knew, would be of no avail; ready compliance might conciliate her guards; she therefore instantly obeyed the summons. Ralberg met her at the foot of the stairs, and taking her in his arms, placed her on a horse before his comrade, and then vaulted upon another himself, which the peasant held till he had mounted it.

A thick darkness blackened the horizon, and a dead silence prevailed, save when, at intervals, short gusts of wind announced a rising storm.

In a short time, vivid flashes of blue lightning momentarily illumined the atmosphere, and shot across the lofty mountains; the combating clouds rolled rapidly towards

each other, and jarring, burst in tremendous claps, which, from their loudness, seemed immediately over the heads of Laurretta and her companions.

After an hour and a half, as nearly as Laurretta could guess, passed in journeying amidst this dreadful contention of the elements, and in almost incessant darkness, except when, at intervals, the darting flashes of lightning seemed to clothe the furze-grown earth in flakes of fire, the storm which, fortunately for the unhappy Laurretta, had been attended with but little rain, began gradually to subside, and a misty moon-light succeeded.

Their road, she now perceived, lay through a deep glen. "Oh, God!" she exclaimed, "should this be my destined grave!" and,

chilled by the apprehensions her own imagination had raised, she insensibly hung down her head and closed her eyes.

A length of time elapsed ere she again ventured to look around her; and she then saw that they were entering upon a forest of lofty trees, thickly planted with underwood.

Ralberg and his companion had been in conversation together since the cessation of the storm; but she had not been able to gather any thing from their discourse that served either to diminish or increase her terrors.

Lauretta, becoming extremely fatigued and exhausted, again closed her eyes; and, notwithstanding the alarm under which she laboured, she struggled ineffectually against

the attacks of sleep, which at last overpowered her fainting frame.

Suddenly starting from her uneasy slumber, she shivered violently; a coldness seized her head; and although the darkness was become much clearer, she could for some time distinguish any object.

A turret, which rose above a distant cluster of trees, now caught her gazing eye; and as she proceeded, she discovered that it formed part of a building towards which her guards were advancing.

Her eyes continued fixed on the object before them; and as she approached it, her alarm became extreme: her conductors spoke not, and she waited her doom in anxious silence.

The light of the moon, reflected on the building, showed her that one wing was entirely in ruins, and the whole edifice in a state of decay.

On being lifted from the horse, she was unable to stand; her knees knocked violently; and, almost insensible of her situation, she sunk upon the supporting arms of Kroonzer.

Ralberg having fastened the horses to a broken pillar of the colonnade, pushed back the heavy gate, which creaked loudly on its hinges; Kroonzer then entered the building with Laurretta in his arms, and as he placed her on a seat seemingly formed by a niche in the stone wall, he called to his companion, telling him instantly to strike a light, and chiding him for having waited his bidding.

His words were re-echoed from every part of the building, and in sounds so dismally hollow, as caused Laurretta to shudder violently.

Ralberg made no answer, but began striking his flint: — for some moments Laurretta heard the uninterrupted jarring of the steel and flint; and, with a heart beating high with the anxious desire of seeing the joyful ray of light which was to release her from the horrid gloom in which she now trembled, she fixed her eyes upon the spot where the sound informed her Ralberg was stationed, when a flash of light drew them suddenly to the opposite side of the hall; it appeared to her to have proceeded from a lamp on the side on which she was sitting; she immediately turned round her head, and beheld a man who carried a lamp, with his back to-

wards her, enter a door, which he immediately closed after him.

As the ruinous state of the building had not left Laurretta the least room to doubt that it was uninhabited, she immediately concluded the man she had seen to be Kroonzer, although she knew not whence he had procured the light, and again turned her eyes towards Ralberg; when, to her great astonishment, she saw them both approaching towards her with their lamp lighted. A shriek, which she endeavoured to suppress, burst involuntarily from her lips, and she immediately perceived the same door partly opened, and the arm and visage of a man, whose features she could not distinguish, appear within it. Theodore instantly recurred to her imagination; the recollection of him

shot like a bolt of ice across her heart, and she sunk lifeless on the ground.

On the return of her senses, she was lying upon an uncanopied bed, and a dim lamp, which was burning in the apartment, showed her Ralberg standing by her side; she immediately cast her eyes round in search of Theodore; — the apartment was large, and the light thrown out by the lamp insufficient to convince her that he whom she dreaded was not within it; — raising herself upon the bed, she seized the hand of Ralberg, and, bursting into tears, conjured him “to save her, — to protect her from Theodore.” — In as softened accents as his rough voice would permit him to articulate, he bade her be composed, and banish her apprehensions. — With a look of doubt, she again fixed on him her streaming eyes, and grasping more

strictly the hand she had before held, she exclaimed, "May heaven reward you as you pity my misfortunes."

The sound of footsteps now called her attention to another part of the chamber. Kroonzer entered: he brought with him a cup of wine, some fruit, and bread; and, having taken the lamp from the ground, he placed them on a table near the bed; he then invited Lauretta to rise and taste them; she answered him only with her tears; he repeated his invitation; she endeavoured to speak, but her sobs prevented her utterance. —Springing from the bed, she threw herself at his feet, and clasped his knees; he pushed her from him, and beckoning to Ralberg to follow him, they left the apartment; and she heard the door locked and bolted after them.

The violent agitation of her spirits being somewhat abated, she took up the lamp, and walked round the apartment, in order to be certified whether any one was secreted within it.—Its form was circular; the roof high and vaulted; the walls of stone; the casements small, and many feet raised from the ground; and the entire appearance led her to conjecture, that she was now in that turret which had attracted her notice while journeying through the forest.

She then set down the lamp, and taking from her bosom a small ivory crucifix, which she placed on the table, she knelt, and, having fervently declared her gratitude for the sufferings of him in memory of whom she wore the sacred remembrancer now before her, she proceeded to implore of him fortitude, to enable her to bear up un-

der the calamities which furrounded her, and his divine aid, against the evil designs of those whom she dreaded more than death; concluding by a declaration of her faith in his beneficence, and her unfeigned submission to his will.

Rising, and replacing in her bosom the crucifix, she felt a composure proceeding from her confidence in that power she had just addressed, which she little imagined she should have experienced; still, however, by no means sufficiently free from alarm to endeavour to compose herself to rest, she placed herself in a chair which stood near the bed, and, as from the stillness of the scene her terrors became gradually abated, she grew more collected, and better able to ruminate on the occurrences of the night.

The figure of the man whom she had seen was unremittingly before her eyes; and the feelings of her mind naturally assigning to him the person of Theodore, her fears began to return as strongly as ever; she sighed deeply, and the tears ran swiftly down her burning cheeks; — she rose, and walked slowly about the apartment, stopping at intervals and fixing her swollen eyes on the ground in mournful reflection on the past, and poignant anticipation of the future.

Faint and exhausted with fatigue of body, and anguish of mind, she again seated herself in the chair. — In a short time, the languor which hung upon her increased almost to inability, her eyes became dim, and big drops of perspiration started from her forehead; — shivering, she extended her trembling arm, and grasped the cup of wine;

with difficulty she raised it to her head, and then, for some moments, her quivering lips refused admittance to the reviving cordial:—having twice swallowed a small draught of the liquor contained in the cup, the trembling which had seized her began to subside, the blood began again to circulate in her veins, and life seemed newly warmed within her heart; she again sipped a small quantity of the wine,—a glow succeeded the shivering fit, and a drowsiness, which she endeavoured in vain to shake off, stole gradually upon her, and lulled her into a profound sleep.

## CHAP. IX.

Tho' plung'd in ills, and exercis'd in care,  
Yet never let the noble mind despair :  
When prest by dangers, and beset with foes,  
The gods their timely succour interpose ;  
And when our virtue sinks, o'erwhelmed with grief,  
By unforeseen expedients bring relief.

PHILIPS.

LAURETTA, on waking, started from her chair, and cast her eyes wildly about, totally ignorant where she was ; and, entirely forgetful of all that had passed the preceding evening. But busy recollection swiftly burst upon her with all its sorrows : she sighed, and raised her eyes to the high casements : the rays of the sun shone hot and full into her apartment ; she conjectured it to be

noon-day, and marvelled that she had slept so long and soundly ; she moved towards the door ; it was still fastened ; and, from what she remembered of the disposition of the little furniture her prison contained, she saw not the smallest cause for suspecting that any one had visited it during the night. She examined the lamp ; it was burnt out in the socket, and the cup of wine stood on the ground where she herself had placed it.

Towards evening, the creaking of the locks announced Kroonzer : he entered with a fresh supply of provisions ; which, together with a flask of wine, and another of water, he placed upon the table ; and, having trimmed the wick of the lamp, and replenished the wasted oil, he lighted it, and left the apartment, without uttering a single word.

The artificial light produced by the lamp tended swiftly to dispel the declining day ; and, with the increasing gloom, the horrors of her situation were greatly accumulated in the imagination of the unhappy Lauretta.

Night had assumed her feeblest form ; when the fair prisoner, shivering from the inaction in which she had passed the solitary day, and still feeling a reluctance to commit herself to the oblivion of sleep, began slowly to perambulate her chamber : — languid and feeble she stopped, and, reclining her arm against the flinty wall, her head sunk insensibly upon her hand, and she stood wrapped in painful thought. Suddenly, the trampling of horses struck her ear — she started, and listened — a shrill tucket was shortly after sounded, and she indistinctly heard the sound of voices. Burning with

the cheering hope of rescue, her heart beat high within her breast, and her respiration became suspended. "The kind baron," she exclaimed, "has lent his aid to my Alphonfus, and they now come to my relief!"

An interval of dead silence ensued:—she moved towards the door, and, trembling with expectation, doubted whether or not she already heard footsteps. But sad conviction proved her agitated senses had deceived her.

Another interval longer than the first passed away, but no sound met her attentive ear. Delusive hope, however, raised in her harassed brain the flattering possibility, that her friends might be searching for her in some distant part of the building, and would still arrive at her prison.

A confusion of footsteps and voices seemingly approaching towards her apartment, now raised in her panting bosom a tumult of passions, amongst which fear was predominant. Till this instant, the pleasing expectation of enlargement, and restoration to her beloved Alphonfus, had solely occupied her imagination: now the hated Theodore recurred to her, and every footstep seemed to increase the dreadful probability, that she might the next moment be destined to fall a victim to his unruly passion, or breathe her last beneath his injurious arm.

The noise increased, and the persons seemed still to advance. "This way, this way," exclaimed an unknown voice; "follow me, this way." Lauretta breathed with extreme difficulty. A blow against the door thrilled her heart, and the same voice

cried out, "The key is not here; ask it of Kroonzer."

Lauretta stood motionless: several voices now spoke at the same time, but so confusedly, that she could not distinguish a word they uttered. Suddenly, all the persons seemed to recede from her prison as swiftly as they had advanced towards it; and the sounds dying gradually away, an awful silence again prevailed.

Trembling lest they should return, Lauretta still continued near the door: she knew not how to account for what she had heard; and the more she ruminated, the more she was bewildered in her conjectures.

A length of time having elapsed, and not the minutest sound met her ear, her alarm

began to subside; and the power of reflection returning, she felt in its fullest force the mortifying disappointment she had sustained: at that moment every future prospect of liberty seemed to have vanished in the present; she burst into a flood of tears, and, sinking upon the bed, gave way to the strongest paroxysms of despair.

Oh hope! thou cheering shadow of each desired object! why does the blackening gloom of disappointment so often cloud the sunny path through which thou leadest us, glowing at every anxious step with warmer expectation? while fancy, strengthening with desire, *seems* the reality, and makes us in imagination blest; until the dream-dispelling dawn of reason opens our eyes, and shows us the wished-for goal, as distant

still, as when we first began the imaginary course!

The mind, harassed beyond its bearing, seeks insensibly the balm designed by nature for its restoration. Thus the fair prisoner, on again opening her eyes to her solitary room, found she had tasted its efficacious sweets, although she had not courted its powers.

During the greatest part of the day, she continued upon the bed, lost in weeping and meditation. The approach of evening again introduced Kroonzer into her apartment: he had brought with him more fruit and another flask of water. He expressed great surprise at her not having tasted what he had set before her the former evening, and asked her to partake of what he had now brought.

She paid little attention to his invitation; but besought him to explain to her the occurrences of the preceding night. He did not answer her; but, having prepared the lamp, he lighted it, and left the chamber; repeating the entreaty he had before urged, for her to eat some of the fruit and bread.

Not in compliance with the request of Kroonzer, but the calls of Nature, Lauretta eat of the fruit and bread, and drank a large cup of water: the wine she determined not to taste, concluding, from the effect it had produced on her the first night of her imprisonment, that its nature was somniferous; and, although she wished for an oblivion of her cares, she had not sufficient resolution to act herself towards the production of it; apprehensive of what might befall her in a state of insensibility.

Thus passed on six melancholy days, in a course of sad reflection, perplexed by a variety of conjectures, and cheered only by the idea that Alphonfus was ignorant of her sufferings.

No human being entered her prison save Kroonzer, who never failed at the accustomed hour; but observed an impenetrable silence to every interrogatory made him by Lauretta, relative to her situation.

No sounds similar to those she had heard on the second night of her imprisonment returned: she concluded herself a prisoner for life, and despair began to subside into calm melancholy.

Towards midnight of the seventh day, she was awakened from the soundest sleep

she had for some time enjoyed, by a violent crash of thunder, which shook the turret: she sprang from the bed, and stood a moment in wild alarm, scarcely recollecting where she was, or knowing what she had heard; when a flash of lightning struck that side of the turret against which she was leaning; the wall instantaneously fell, and carried along with it the shrieking Laretta.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.